THE PRINCIPLES and PRACTICES, Of certain MODERATE DIVINES OF THE Church of ENGLAND, Abusively called Latitudinarians

(Greatly mis-understood)

Truly Represented and Defended.

Wherein (by the way)

Some Controversies, of no mean Importance, are succinctly Discussed :

IN

A Free DISCOURSE *between two Intimate Friends.*

In III Parts. The Second Edition.

Phil. 4. 5. *Let your Moderation be known unto all men.*

LONDON:

Printed for *Lodowick Lloyd* ; and are to be sold at the Green Dragon in *Pauls* Church-yard. 1671.

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To the Reader.

READER,

WHat may be the Fate of this Book, I can't Divine, nor will I be ſolicitous concerning it: But I expect, and alſo *claim* at thine hands ſo much Candour, as that, how meanly ſoever thou mayeſt think of it, thou wilt not judge uncharitably of the Author's Deſign in writing it. I (that may beſt know it) am able to aſſure thee, that it was not to gratifie thoſe Perſons (he wiſheth he may not rather offend them) whom he therein giveth

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a true account of; but to ſerve a more noble Intereſt: Nor is it his deſire, that their Adverſaries would entertain a more favourable opinion of them, upon their reading the following Lines, but onely in order to their being reconciled to their *Spirit* and *Principles*.

This is an Age wherein plain and open-hearted Dealing will be by no means endured, and muſt look for no better thanks from the generality, than Calumnies and down-right Rayling. But I am very ſure that no man can be eaſily provoked by any thing in this *Dialogue*, but he that accounts Moderation a great Crime; and is conſcious to himſelf,

ſelf, that he is, in the way it hath pléaſed him to eſpouſe, a hot ſpirited and violent *Zealot*. For neither *Theophilus* nor *Philalethes*, have taken a courſe to exaſperate any one of the conteſting Parties, but only (and much alike too) the high and fierce men of each Party. And as for ſuch, they could not perſwade themſelves to be over-careful not to diſpleaſe them; as too well knowing that it would ſignifie nothing ſo to be; they being a Generation of people whoſe waſpiſh and teſty (not to add proud) Spirits, can by no means brook a Diſſenter, ſcarcely in the ſmalleſt, and moſt trivial matters. Whereas *Theophilus*, as he paſſeth along,

doth engage himſelf in the Confutation of certain Opinions, I deſire thee to take notice, that he is, notwithſtanding, ſo far from a diſputing or contradicting Genius, that I know no man more averſe than himſelf thereto: And he thinks time infinitely better ſpent in the ſerious practice of true Piety, than in diſputing or ſtudying Controverſies: and that there is no ſuch life, when all is done, as that which is chiefly employed in mortifying Corruptions, and making our ſelves more and more like to God, and fit for the enjoyment of him. And, indeed, if all our Profeſſors of Chriſtianity did ſincerely love God; and made it their great

buſineſs

buſineſs to keep Conſciences void of offence towards him and men; it would be ſcarcely worth the while to concern our ſelves much about curing them of any of their miſtakes: For ſo long as they are careful to exerciſe themſelves in ſo doing, to be ſure they cannot poſſibly be ſuch as would ſo far injure them, as to render them uncapable of Eternal Bleſſedneſs. But ſeeing there are ſeveral *Opinions*, very highly cryed up among us, which do apparently make many of the Embracers of them much worſe, and have an extreamly bad influence upon their Lives, and therefore much more upon their Souls, it muſt needs be a work of great Charity

to

to endeavour to undeceive thoſe that hold them. *And* they are ſuch Doctrines alone, as *Theophilus* is aſſured are of very bad conſequence, that he hath *much* troubled himſelf about, in this *Diſcourſe*. *As* for the laſt *Opinion*, that he ſpends any conſiderable time in endeavouring to ſhew the falſity of, it was at firſt his intention to take no notice of it: But (to deal freely with thee) he could not, upon ſecond thoughts, gain leave of his *Conſcience* to let it paſs: for that told him that he would ſhew but little love to his infinitely *Good God*, or concernment for his Honour, ſhould he not take advantage of ſo fit and proper an occaſion

ſion as was then offered him to vindicate him from the moſt unworthy Repreſentation that Doctrine giveth of him. And he ſolemnly profeſſeth that he would have ſaid nothing of it, were he not conſtrained to do otherwiſe by his Love to God, and the Souls of Men: And by his earneſt deſire to give his Teſtimony againſt the abuſe that is thereby put upon the beſt of Beeings, & alſo to contribute his little Mite towards the utter ſilencing of that Plea for Careleſneſs and Irreligion, that very many (if not moſt) men from thence make. *Whoever they be that ſhall take offence at that Perſon for freely ſpeaking his own mind, becauſe it hath*

hath the ill hap not to jump with theirs, I would fain know of them why he may not be as much out of humour (though he is resolved he will not) with them *again: For surely* he *doth not more differ from* them, *than* they *do from* him.

Well, *Reader*, it is high time to be reconciled to *Moderation* and *Sobriety*, to lay aside our uncharitable and (therefore) unchristian heats against each other: And to labour to preserve the Unity of the Spirit (if it be not already quite lost) in the bond of Peace, and throw water upon those Flames that threaten our destruction, (and but for God's Infinite Mercy would have effected it before now) instead of ad-

adding more fewel to them. And that is the *great Design* (as thou wilt easily perceive) of the ensuing *Discourse*.

Moreover, I most humbly entreat thee to consider, that as God was not in the *Whirlwind*, but in the *still Voice*; So *Divine Truth* is far more unlikely to be found among men of violent and boisterous Passions, than among those that are *soberly* and *sedately considerative*. Passion doth cloud and darken the understanding, it casts a thick mist before the eye of the Soul, and makes it altogether unapt to discern a difference betwixt *Truth*, and the *error* that is neerest to it; and to distinguish it from one of the extreams

treams which it lyeth between.

I have another Requeſt to make to thee, *viz.* *If thou ſhalt vouchſafe to caſt an eye upon this* Diſcourſe, *that thou wouldeſt not only read here and there ſome part of it, but take the ſmall pains to run it through: For by this means thou mayeſt underſtand the Authors ſence in ſeveral Paſſages, which otherwiſe thou wilt be lyable to be miſtaken concerning: And alſo to go away with a falſe notion (in ſome Particulars) of the Perſons therein repreſented. Whom, ſhould they judge it an over-bold attempt to give the World, without their own conſent or knowledge, a Character of them, he knows to be Maſters*

of

of so great ingenuity as will easily encline them to put up such faults (how great soever they may seem in themselves) as are mitigated by the Circumstance of well-meaning.

The *Author* is aware that the matters discoursed might have been digested into a more accurate Method; but yet he is not like to *apologize* for it, till thou canst convince him, that the neglect of Formalities, and curious exactness of any kind, in *Discourses between Friends*, is blame worthy. Nor yet will he plead excuse for the plainness of his Style, till he hath reason to believe that the Vulgar (whose benefit is here principally intended

tended) are capable of understanding higher Language.

I shall detain thee no longer, than till I have told thee, that he saith, may this trifle be instrumental to beget in but any one a more free, ingenuous, and amicable Temper, he shall not think he hath cause to repent his permitting it to be exposed to publick Censure.

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Theophilus, a Lover of God.
Philalethes, a Lover of Truth.

ERRATA.

Page 27. line 13, read κατα. p. 165. l. 13. r. Make. p. 289. l. 24. r. 100.

A FREE DISCOURSE BETWEEN Two Intimate Friends, &c.

Philalethes.

I. *The entrance into the Discourse*

MY dearest *Theophilus*, the observation I have for some time made of the great change in your countenance, from that spriteful and chearful air I was wont with pleasure there to behold, to a melancholy pensiveness and deep dejection, hath made me not a little solicitous concerning the cause: nor can I but entertain a great suspicion, that it is no ordinary Misfortune that hath made such an alteration in so well-composed, and excellently tempered a minde, as yours is.

Part I.

Theophilus.

I am much obliged to you, my beſt Friend, for the good opinion you have conceived of me; which muſt be imputed not in the leaſt to mine own merit, but wholly to your goodneſs: for I aſſure you, my temper is as obnoxious to troubleſome impreſſions as other mens, how ſedate ſoever you are pleas'd to think it.

Philal. None doubtleſs may pretend, ſo well as your ſelf, to underſtand it: but if it be ſo impreſſible as you ſay, I have known you far better able to hide your infirmity then I perceive you now are.

Theoph. I ſay, *Philalethes*, no man can with leſs reaſon boaſt of *Stoiciſm*, then my ſelf: but were my ſoul the moſt unconcerned of any mortals, and as free from all diſturbing Paſſions, as is in this ſtate poſſible; that diſcompoſure of thoughts you read in my looks, you will

will not at all wonder at, when you have once understood the occasion. But I shall defer the satisfaction of your desire in acquainting you therewith, till I have informed you, that I have taken notice of as little serenity of late, in *your* aspect; as Critical as you are in observing *mine*: and have several times seen so thick a Cloud there, as made me conclude the distemper of *my* minde to be no whit greater than that of *yours*. Part I.

Philal. I see then that I am no less to seek in the Art of Dissembling then your self; and you shall presently acknowledge, that of us two, I am the more open-breasted: for though you have kept me hitherto in suspence, and delayed to let me learn the ground of *your* trouble; you shall not wait one minute for the knowledge of the true cause of *mine*. It is not to be attributed, *Theophilus*, to any personal evil, or

Part I. of a private concern; but to a very quick ſenſe of the moſt deplorable State of this our Church. It pains me to the heart, when I conſider to what a prodigious height, about matters of Religion, our feuds are grown; and how utterly averſe the too many Sects and Parties we are crumbled into are, to entertain thoughts of peace and accommodation. When I well weigh in my minde, what a rare Engine the Goſpel is, for the effecting the moſt hearty agreement and friendſhip among men imaginable, (wherein, I perſwade my ſelf, it fails not of happie ſucceſs, where it is ſincerely entertained) and then obſerve what a Make-bate it hath notwithſtanding proved, among the generality of our profeſſors of it; and occaſions, through their own moſt wretched folly and naughtineſs, the ſharpeſt Conteſts, and moſt bitter and irreconcileable Enmities: I finde I have more

more than enough to do, to govern my ſelf as I am ſenſible I ought, and to keep the inferiour faculties of my ſoul in ſubordination to its ſuperiour, as becomes a Man and Chriſtian, in the reſentment of it. Part I.

Theoph. Had you not the ambition, *Philalethes*, to be now beforehand with me in Friendſhip, and firſt to unboſome your ſelf to me; you had by this time received the very ſame account of that Melancholy that in me you ſpyed.

Philal. Though I could never give credit to the *Pythagorean* Doctrine of the Tranſmigration of ſouls into divers bodies, yet I could be almoſt tempted to fancie what is more ſtrange, namely, that our two bodies are at once informed by one and the ſame ſoul.

Theoph. This is not a thing ſo wonderful, as to incline me once to dream of ſuch an Hypotheſis, were it much leſs incredible than it is, to

Part I. enable me to give an account of it: for though, ſure enough, our ſouls are as diſtinct as other folks; yet they being conjoyned by the ſame principles and intereſt, I can much better underſtand how this you ſo admire at ſhould be, than how it came to paſs, that *Hippocrates* his Twins laugh'd and cry'd, liv'd and dy'd together. But, my good *Philalethes*, hath it not increaſed the diſquiet of your minde, to think what uſage ſome worthy Friends of ours (whom I know you have much heard of, though I ſuppoſe you are not ſo well acquainted with them as my ſelf) meet with from our hot and contentious Chriſtians? and how ill they are recompenſed by the ſeveral litigating and ſharply-conteſting Parties, for their induſtrious endeavours to make peace between them?

Philal. Yes, *Theophilus*, that it hath; and to my great trouble I have

have often obſerved, that the Fierce men (as much at odds as they are among themſelvs) can too well agree in heaping Calumnies on theſe Gentlemen, and in giving them the worſt of Characters: In which dealing of theirs with *them*, they have imitated that of the Heathens with ſome of the Primitive Chriſtians; who firſt dreſſed them in Bears skins and then baited them. The world is not ſo depraved, nor do I think ever can be, as to reproach good men under that notion: that therefore theſe perſons may be cryed down with the greater ſhew of zeal, and that it may be looked upon as the intereſt of Religion to caſt an odium on them; I have heard them repreſented as a Generation of people that have revived the abominable principles of the old *Gnoſticks*; and that they are of thoſe long ſince extirpated Hereticks the natural and genuine off-ſpring. Part I.

II. *The hateful character given by ſome to certain Friends of* Theophilus & Philalethes.

Part I.

Theoph. You say very right, for they are represented as *such* for all the world; we being told with much confidence, by those that think themselvs greatly affronted, if whatsoever drops from their mouths be not received as a Sacred Oracle, that they are a company of men that are prepared for the embracing of any Religion, & to renounce or subscribe to any Doctrine, rather then incur the hazard of Persecution; and that they esteem him the onely Heretick that refuseth to be of that Religion the King or State professeth; or, at least, this the most dangerous Heresie, that Suffering is to be preferred before Sinning. They are characterized as people, whose onely Religion it is to temporize, & transform themselves into any Shape for their Secular interests; and that judge no Doctrine so Saving, as that which obligeth to so complying and condescending a humour, as to become

all

all things to all men, that ſo by any means they may gain ſomething: as I heard one once jear a moſt worthy perſon that is one of them, as he thought, no doubt, very wittily. Part I.

Philal. Have you not heard the Cholerick Gentlemen diſtinguiſh theſe perſons, by a long Nick-name; which they have taught their tongues to pronounce as roundly, as if it were ſhorter then it is, by four or five ſyllables?

Theoph. Yes, *Philalethes*, oftener, I preſume, then you have: for though we are both Country-men, and wonted more then moſt to a ſolitary life; yet *my* occaſions call *me* abroad, and into variety of companies, more frequently then *yonrs* do *you*: where I hear, ever and anon, the word of a foot and half long ſounded out with a great grace; and that not onely at Fires and Tables, but ſometimes from *Pulpits* too: nay, and it accompanied good ſtore of other

Part I. other Bumbaſts, and little Witticiſms, in ſeaſoning, not long ſince the ſtately *Oxonian* Theatre.

Philal. I am not ſo little skill'd in the language of the Beaſt, as to be ignorant of the derivation of that Long name: but I pray, *Theophilus*, what do thoſe that ſo pleaſe themſelvs with it mean by it?

Theoph. That I can tell you from their own mouths: for I have heard them give a deſcription of their *Latitudinarian*; and 'tis this ſhort one, *He is a Gentleman of a wide ſwallow.*

Philal. Very good! It ſeems then his *Conſcience* is the Seat of his Latitude, and that this name includes the foremention'd Lovely Character.

Theoph. It does ſo. And thus as we have ſeen children make an ugly picture upon a wall, & then ſpit at it; or dreſs up a Puppet, and then make ſport with it: ſo thoſe, whom one might

night expect ſhould be better em- Part I.
ployed, make a deformed and miſ-
ſhapen Beaſt, and then worry their
own creature. But if to be highly
charged be a ſufficient evidence of
Guilt, who can accuſe the enemies
of the Primitive Chriſtians of bar-
barity in their carriage towards
them? For it is well known that
the imputations they lay under, were
no better then thoſe of Atheiſm, the
moſt beaſtly Inceſt, and bloudy
Cruelty.

Phil. Nay, how can we then blame even our bleſſed *Saviour*'s Judges, for pronouncing that Sentence they did againſt *him*, ſeeing the Crimes he was charged with, were of the foulеſt nature, and no leſs then Sorcery, Treaſon and Blaſphemy? But as confidently as theſe men are thus highly accuſed, and that by thoſe that pretend to be of all others beſt affected to that Religion, that is no leſs *peaceable* than it is *pure*, and

that

Part I.

that engageth its professors not easily to *think*, as well as not to *speak* ill of any; the little knowledge that I have of them makes me conclude, that it is no hard matter to prove, that their Accusers, in being *so*, declare themselves to have the *wide swallows* they condemn their Brethren for; and that so wide, as glibly to down with Camels, as much as one sort of them may seem to strain at Gnats.

III. *An Argument of their being greatly abused in that Character.*

Theoph. You say well; there is indeed no difficulty in proving it: For what unprejudiced person can easily perswade himself to judge so very hardly of these men, that considers, that there are not any that have better than they, (I had almost said, so well) demonstrated and improved that Principle, which is the Foundation of all Religion, *viz. That Moral good and evil are not onely* such, *because God commands the one, and forbids the other; but because*

becauſe the things themſelves are ſo eſſentially and unalterably. That there is an eternal Reaſon, why that which is good ſhould be ſo *and required, and why that which is evil ſhould be* ſo *and forbidden; which depends not ſo much on the divine* will *as the divine* nature.

Philal. This is to me a demonſtration that they are moſt injuriouſly repreſented. I muſt confeſs, had they broached ſuch Doctrine as the *Hobbiſts* propagate, *viz. That all Moral righteouſneſs is founded in the law of the Civil Magiſtrate: That the holy Scriptures are obliging by vertue onely of a Civil Sanction: That whatſoever Magiſtrates command, their Subjects are bound to ſubmit to, notwithſtanding contrary to Divine Moral laws:* I ſay, had they publiſhed ſuch Doctrine, I ſhould then my ſelf moſt freely ſubſcribe to the worſt that hath been ſaid of them.

IV. *That Character due to the broachers of* Hobbian *Doctrine.*

Theoph.

Part I.

V. *But that doctrine by none better confuted then by these men.*

Theoph. And so should I too; but those accursed Principles (for I can give them no better Epithet) were never more solidly confuted, than by these men. Nay, they might have rendered themselvs too liable to the hardest Censures of men, more *judicious* and *critical*, than *ingenuous* and *charitable*, had they preached those doctrines, that not a few of those very people that make the loudest out-cries against them have formerly, and I have cause to fear do still instruct their credulous disciples in: whom yet neither *I* nor *they* dare pass an hard sentence against, upon that account; because we *hope*, and *believe* also, that they do not discern the natural consequences of their Principles. But I for my own part must needs confess, that should I think as they profess to do in several points, I should be in no small danger of being, in their hateful sense, a man of *Latitude*. I

VI. *That preaching some of their adversaries doctrines might render them too well deserving that character in the judgment of over-critical persons.*

shall

ſhall onely inſtance in one of thoſe Doctrines, that paſs for currant among many of theſe ſevere Cenſurers; *viz. That which is oppoſite to that I ſaid thoſe perſons have ſo rarely well demonſtrated.* You know that not a few of their Adverſaries do make the will of God the onely meaſure of good and evil; and will by no means admit that diſtinction, *Some things are good becauſe commanded, other things are commanded becauſe good*; and ſo on the contrary.

Philal. No, I know they will not. I was my ſelf once told by a too hot Divine, that yet was in ſome things more ſober than many of them, when I delivered that diſtinction, and expreſſed my approbation of it, that I ſpake blaſphemy.

Theoph. 'Tis very likely; *I* have alſo, and that more than once, been ſhent with great gravity upon the very ſame account. However, *Philalethes,*

Part I. *lalethes*, God forbid that we ſhould ſo far imitate the weakneſs of the men we blame, as to ſay that holding the forementioned Principle, they muſt all of them of neceſſity be of that Dutch Gentleman *Zeglovius* his minde, who hath impudently told the world in Print, that God may pleaſe, out of the abſolute Soveraignty of his will, to command all that wickedneſs he hath forbidden, and forbid all that holineſs he hath commanded. Nor dare I ſay, or yet ſuſpect, that they believe that we can have no aſſurance, that God will perform either his threatnings or promiſes; and that he doth not *will* to deceive his creatures in making the one and the other; which deception, if he *wills* it, muſt needs be good: nor that when they ſay that God is of a holy nature, they mean no more, than that he cannot abide to be diſobeyed; which is but a ſlender commendation: yet who ſeeth not,

not, that will but give himself leave to think at all freely, that these are consequences inevitably following from that their Doctrine? which, as I said, have the men they look upon as such Debauchies, divers of them most excellently discovered the falsity of; and most convincingly proved the unchangeable natures, and eternal laws and differences of good and evil: and that it is the most horrid Contradiction to assert, that God can *will* that his creatures should not be just and righteous, good and holy; and, those of them that I know, take occasion frequently, to declare their abhorrence of that opinion, with all that are derived from it, or of kin to it. Now, *Philalethes*, what can their design, think you, be in thus doing? can they manage any other than that of convincing men of the indispensable obligation that lieth upon them, to love and prosecute all goodness, and

Part I.

Part I. to ſhun and abominate all ſin? what other end can they ſerve by this means, beſides rendering the Religion of Chriſt Jeſus moſt amiable, and effectual as to its great intent?

VII. *Another Argument that they are abuſed.*

Philal. For my part, I am not able to imagine, how they can propoſe to themſelvs any other: And what you ſaid laſt, brings to my remembrance another Argument that will convince any candid perſon, that it is, at leaſt, moſt highly *probable*, that they are, in being repreſented as was ſaid, very unjuſtly dealt with, *viz.* That none have with more ſtrength of reaſon demonſtrated, that the grand deſigne of the Goſpel is to make men good: not to intoxicate their brains with notions, or furniſh their heads with a ſyſteme of opinions; but to reform mens lives, and purifie their natures: which noble principle together with the former, doth utterly overthrow

that

that *Latitudinarianiſm* they are accuſed of, as he muſt be blind, or ſhut his eyes, that doth not ſee it: And if it were well minded and improved by our angry men, it would, no queſtion, turn the edge of their zeal quite another way; and convince them, that there are too many things they lay a heavier ſtreſs upon, than they can ever bear. Part I.

Theoph. This was excellently well obſerved of you; and as you ſay, if the deſigne of the Goſpel were well underſtood, and as well conſidered by thoſe men, they would think their precious time may be much more profitably ſpent, than in contending about meer ſpeculations, or ſuch practices as neither ſerve nor diſſerve that deſigne; and have no influence either into the bettering or depraving the ſouls of men.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, I could be glad to know more diſtinctly than I do, how it comes to paſs, that

Part I. it is the ill fate of thoſe our Friends, to have the worſt character given them, by the *Rigid men* of all Perſwaſions: what unluckie ſtars are they born under, that, of all others, they ſhould meet with the worſt uſage, and fouleſt play; if they have given no occaſion to thoſe people to think and ſpeak ſo ill of them; nor by any default of their own, have expoſed and laid themſelves open to their cenſures?

VIII. Theophilus *undertaketh impartially to repreſent them*

Theoph. I ſhall willingly gratifie you in this requeſt; which I will do in giving you an impartial repreſentation of them; wherein by the way, as we paſs along, you will clearly perceive, what you are already, I know, inclined to believe; that ſome things, at leaſt, not *blameworthy*, and others very highly deſerving praiſe, have made them the objects of ſo much ſpite; and that is occaſioned by none but ſuch things.

Philal.

Philal. The account in general, that from men worthy to be credited I have had of them, and particularly that they are *persons of great Moderation*, hath prepared me, were you a perfect stranger, not to question your veracity, let the character be never so good you shall give of them.

Theoph. I assure you, *Philalethes*, I am under no temptation, to tell you a tittle more than I know to be true concerning them: nor do I think it can be my interest to tell, at any time, a lye for God himself.

Philal. You might have reserved this, for one to whom you are less known, than you are to me; and therefore, I pray proceed: but if you please, I will make so bold as to set you your Method; and desire you first to give an account of their *Practices*, and then of their *Opinions*.

Theoph. You may, if you will,

Part I. call this *freedom*, which I acknowledge a great *favour*, but by no means *boldness*: And the Order you prescribe I shall as willingly proceed in, as if it had been mine own choice; but I will not promise you to keep my self over-exactly to it, and never to confound these two.

Philal. I do not expect you should.

IX. *Of their Practices.*

Theoph. Well then, *Philalethes*, as to their *Practices*; the familiarity that divers of them have honoured me with, assures me, that there are none among whom more true goodness is to be found, than is in them observable. Nor have their aspersers, as I can learn, ever convicted any of them, as persons offensive in their behaviour either towards God or men: nor can I tell, that any of those that are *most* maligned, have been so much as *accused* of such actions in particular, as are plain and

un-

undoubted tranſgreſſions of the firſt or ſecond Table. Part I.

Philal. I perceive you put an Emphaſis upon *undoubted*; and that therefore they are charged with thoſe things, that their Adverſaries *judge* Tranſgreſſions of the one or the other Table.

Theoph. The reaſon of that Emphaſis you have well gueſſed at; for they are accuſed of ſome ſuch things as divers look upon as breaches of the firſt Table, and particularly of the ſecond Commandment; which are by others eſteemed not onely not *ſo*, but in certain caſes to be ſo far from being prohibited, that they are their *duty*. In ſhort, the grand fault that is found by ſome in their practice, is their *Conformity* to the preſent Eccleſiaſtical Laws; which enjoyn ſome Rites in the Worſhip of God, which there is no expreſs warrant from the Scriptures for. But whether this be well or ill

X. *Of their Conformity to the Eccleſiaſtical Laws.*

Part I. done of them, I muſt not now ſtand to determine.

Philal. Nor will I deſire you; it being a Controverſie that will take up too much time; and beſides, the drieſt and moſt unpleaſant that ever I engaged in.

Theoph. I have the ſame opinion of it; and therefore you ſhall not *hire* me to conſent to the ſpending of any part of the time we have together upon ſuch an Argument. All that need be done now, will be to conſider whether the perſons we are diſcourſing of, can poſſibly be guilty of ſo great an offence in their *Conformity*, as may not admit a charitable interpretation. For none can think, except ſuch as are groſly ſilly, that it is indiſputable that the matters now enjoyned are unlawful.

XI. *The unreaſonableneſs of cenſuring men upon the account of their Conformity.*

Philal. Thoſe muſt be very ignorant that ſo judge; when as men, as famous both for Learning and Piety as the Church of *England* hath ever

ever been bleſſed with, have both by their own *Conformity* declared their allowance of them, and alſo defended their Lawfulneſs, againſt thoſe of a contrary perſwaſion. Part I.

Theoph. Nay more than ſo, *Philalethes*, you know that divers of the moſt eminent Proteſtant Divines of the beſt Reformed Churches beyond the Seas, ſuch as *Calvin*, *Beza*, *Zanchy*, and others, have declared their judgements for Conformity to them; and ſome of them, their earneſt deſire, that the Miniſters of this Church would comply with the will of their Governours in obſerving them, while they ſhall think it fit to impoſe them.

Philal. I am not ignorant of it: And me-thinks the Authority of thoſe men, who were our great Champions in the Anti-Romane Cauſe, ſhould be of no ſmall account with us all; but much leſs contemned by any of us.

Theoph.

Part I.

Theoph. Me-thinks it should not; there being *this* moreover to say for their being competent judges in the case, that they were not onely men of great Learning and Godliness, but also unintereſted; and therefore under no Temptation of being byaſſed in their judgements in this particular. So that I say, It is a most reasonable *postulatum*, that Conformity to the present enjoyned Rites, may be by those that oppose it, acknowledged not to be so *plainly*, at least, condemned, but that very wise and good men may not see it so to be: and therefore may judge it not onely *lawful* to conform, but also *their duty* so long as they persist in that opinion.

Philal. I think it a very clear case, that the Conformists Adversaries have sufficient reason to desire, and take kindly the same favourable thoughts of *their* Nonconformity; they well knowing how obnoxious it

it hath been to an ill conſtruction, and hard cenſures: Nor can they be ignorant what a black and odious character is by ſome men given themſelvs; wherein thoſe have paid divers of them in their own coyn, and meaſured to them with the ſame meaſure, wherewith they have meted, to thoſe our Friends we are ſpeaking of, in an eſpecial manner, and more than to any other Conformable perſons. Part I.

Theoph. What you ſay is moſt true; but yet I muſt tell you, that theſe friends of ours, (and I thank you for giving me this occaſion) though, as you ſaid, moſt provoked, are not in the number of thoſe Warm Gentlemen of the other extreme; but, as I have often obſerved, they expreſs great candor towards them.

Philal. I am glad to hear it; and that they are ſo wiſe men, and good Chriſtians, as not to return cenſures for

Part I. for censures, and evil for evil. Nor can I well conceive how any ingenuously-minded person can admit so much as an hard *thought* of any, meerly upon the account of their not being of his minde, in matters that have been controverted, as these things have been, between men of confessedly-great worth and goodness. I declare for my part, and I care not who knows it, that I love with my heart a sober and peaceably minded Nonconformist, as much Conformist as I am my self.

Theoph. Gods blessing on your heart for that, *Philalethes*, and I also do freely declare the same, and that I think him never the worse man that is so, supposing I perceive him conscientious in other matters; and particularly that he is not of a censorious, seditious, and tumultuous spirit; but yet such I would not *hate* neither, but pitie and pray for them. But now, do you not think it

it unaccountably ſtrange, that thoſe our Friends, upon the ſcore of their Conformity, ſhould not be ſo much cenſured as erroneous and miſtaken as men of no conſcience ; as if it were as plainly prohibited as Murther, Adultery, and the groſſeſt ſins ? Part I.

Philal. I cannot think otherwiſe; but yet 'tis not more ſtrange then it is true, as I my ſelf alſo well know. For I happened but the other day upon a Book written by a Divine, that is of a Separated party, and looking into it, chanced to light upon an oppoſition of the Conformiſts to the *three children* ; and *Theſe* being commended for their Heroick reſolution, rather to be thrown into the fiery furnace than to ſerve the Kings Gods, and worſhip the Image which he had ſet up ; he next falls bewailing *Thoſe*, in theſe words : *How many in this hour of temptation, are caught in this enſnaring tryal !*

Part I. *tryal! What say some? Come, let us rather conform to the Ceremonies, than lose our Liberties; rather let us bow at the name of Jesus, than lose all for the sake of Jesus; it is better to baptize with the Cross, than to bear the cross; and to wear a Surplice, than to pinch our carcase. Thus many (it is to be feared) destroy their consciences to keep their places.* And so he goes on talking after that rate. And though he qualifieth his Censure with an [*it is to be feared*] yet he plainly supposeth, that to use the Ceremonies of our Church is as unquestionably sinful, as to worship false Gods, and fall down to graven images: and therefore, notwithstanding that Parentheſis, he endeavours to make his Readers *conclude* rather than *fear*, that Conformists destroy their Consciences, (that is, those of them that he thinks had ever any) to keep their Places. Nay, three or four lines *after*, as he doth

also

alſo *before*, without mincing the matter, he poſitively aſſerts as much, in theſe words: *Alas poor ſouls, how are they fallen in the hour of temptation!*

Theoph. You have, I perceive, a very happie memory: for I my ſelf ſome days ſince met alſo with the ſame Book and paſſage; and I dare ſay, you have been ſo faithful as to quote it word for word. But whether thus to judge be conſiſtent with the ingenuity of a Chriſtian; I leave to that Gentleman and his Brethren, in their cool bloud to conſider. But I am ſure if this be not a moſt manifeſt tranſgreſſion of the law of Charity, it is no eaſie matter to tranſgreſs it. But let theſe men print or preach what they liſt, I am ſhrewdly tempted much to queſtion, whether they ſo much declare their *own* thoughts, as what they would have their *people* think; it being their great intereſt, that themſelvs

Part I. ſelvs ſhould be reputed the onely men, that have not ſhipwrackt faith and a good conſcience.

Philal. This ſounds like ſuch an uncharitable Cenſure, as you blame *them* for.

Theoph. I expected that reply; but there is too good reaſon thus to fear: for I profeſs it cannot enter into *my* head, that thoſe of them, that are men of competent Learning and Parts, ſhould ſuffer their tongues and pens ſo to laſh out, if there were not more of cunning than any thing elſe in it. For they muſt needs know as well as any body can tell them, let them make their Admirers believe what they will, that it is no eaſie matter to make it good, that the things upon the account of which they ſo aſperſe their Brethren, are againſt any Law of God: but yet the people muſt be born in hand, that they are ſo *plainly* ſinful, that he muſt needs ſhut his eyes againſt the

the light, that is not convinc'd they are so: or rather, that all knowing men, can not but *suspect* them at least, so to be; but most have so little of their self-denial, and zeal for Gods honour, as rather to yield to them than lose their Livings, and expose themselvs to sufferings. Part I.

Philal. You have sufficiently vindicated your self from uncharitable Censuring; for surely that cannot deserve so ill a name, which is grounded upon so good a reason as you have given.

Theoph. And I thank you, my Friend, that you gave me this occasion of purging my self from so foul and unchristian a crime.

Philal. And you have done it, as I said, very satisfactorily: for Prudence, no question, is a necessary ingredient in every virtue; nor could I ever think blinde charity to be more truly *so*, than blinde zeal.

Theoph. But to proceed where we brake off. Is it not greatly to be wondered at, *Philalethes*, that theſe men will not afford thoſe that differ in their practice from them, in diſputable matters, any more favourable Title, than that of *people of proſtituted Conſciences*; let them live never ſo exactly according to all the notices of Gods will clearly expreſſed in his Word? which, as I ſaid, thoſe Friends of ours are ſo far from living in contradiction to, that I hear of no clamours againſt them upon that account; which I am confident I ſhould with both ears, if any thing of immorality did diſcover it ſelf in their converſations.

Philal. But now I think of it, don't you believe that there are thoſe Conformable perſons, that have given too good cauſe for ſuch a ſevere Cenſure?

Theoph. I don't think that any have done ſo, by their bare Conformity:

mity: but whereas there are thoſe that in all our Changes, have been obſerved to be zealous ſtill, for that which was moſt countenanced by the Authority that bare the ſway; and have been taken notice of to leap out of one extreme into another; that is, from the hight of *Fanaticiſm* to that of *Conformity*; theſe, *I* confeſs, may thank themſelvs for the hard words that are heapt upon them; but they did not merit them, or gave occaſion for them, by their meer Conforming: their former actings might have rendered their Honeſty too liable to ſuſpicion, though they had never Conformed; nor may their doing what is now enjoyned, conſidered as ſuch, adde to the ſuſpicion; but onely conſidered as diametrically oppoſite to former actings. And now *I* have this occaſion, *I* muſt tell you, that *I* know none of our Friends in the number of thoſe, that have merited Part I.

Part I. the opprobrious name of *Turncoats*. But under the late Uſurpers, they did ſo behave themſelvs, as that ſome of them were great Sufferers for his Majeſtie and the Church; and the reſt of thoſe I was acquainted with, though they were ſo *prudent* as to keep as much as they could out of harms way, and not to expoſe themſelvs to needleſs ſufferings, and ſuch of which there could come no good; yet were they no leſs *conſciencious*, and had a care to preſerve themſelvs unſpotted from the guilt of the then wilde extravagances.

Philal. You have told me no more, than I have often before heard; but I am glad of its confirmation from your mouth. I pray pardon my occaſioning ſo many digreſſions from the main buſineſs, and be pleaſed now again to return to it.

Theoph. You ſhall not have my *pardon*, but *thanks*, for the digreſ-

ſions

sions you have occasioned; they being none of them, I think, impertinent. To go on then: They are not onely not *scandalous*, but very *lovely* also in their behaviour, and greatly *obliging*. I never in any one *sort* of men observed so much of openheartedness and ingenuity, freedom, sociableness, and affability, as in *these* generally. They have nothing of that Crabbed austerity, foolish affectation, or sullen gravity that render too many of their Censurers to *wise men* not a little contemptible. But as the Pharisees bare our Saviour a grudge, upon the account of his being contrary to *their* humour in this very particular; so I have reason to believe, that by this means, these persons do not a little distaste divers of their Adversaries, because they look so unlike them, and condemn those their follies, by a quite contrary carriage. But with any Sarcastical smartness

XII. *Of their Conversation.*

Part I. to perſtringe thoſe fooleries, which ſome of them have done, is looked on as an expreſſion of a profane ſpirit: as if to diſlike that which makes Religion ridiculous, were to be an enemy to Religion it ſelf.

Philal. Nay, I have thought, that there is too much cauſe to ſuſpect, that what they themſelvs cannot but acknowledge very commendable in thoſe our Friends, is a great motive to them, ſo much the more to traduce them; as being jealous that they may thereby gain with many too great eſteem. For there was one, ſome time ſince, that took occaſion to commend a Reverend and moſt worthy perſon that is called by the Long name, to an eminent Paſtor of a Separated Congregation in *London*, from whom he received this anſwer; *That Jeſus Chriſt hath not in this Nation a greater enemy; and that the goodneſs of his life was that which put him into a capacity*

of

of doing ſo much the more miſchief.

Theoph. The ſtory you have told me, I ſhould have looked upon as not incredible, had a leſs faithworthy perſon related it than your ſelf. For I have often obſerved that Scandalous Miniſters, of which there are too many, the more is the pity (though the number of them is computed by thoſe that gladly take all advantages to beſpatter and fling dirt in the faces of their Civil and Eccleſiaſtical Governours, to be far greater than I am verily perſwaded it is) I ſay, I have often obſerved, that *ſcandalous* Miniſters have the good luck better to eſcape the tongues of our Carping people, than the moſt painful and conſciencious.

Philal. Any man may, if he will, make this obſervation: And truly I have too good reaſon to fear, that not a few of thoſe men are more ſorry that all Conforming Miniſters

Part I.

are not persons of debauched lives, than that any are so: for if they hear but an ugly tale of any one of them, they never stand to examine whether it be true or false, but with great greedines catch at it, and send it flying.

XIII. *Of their Preaching.*

Theoph. Would you have me, in the next place, to inform you, how those Divines in their *Pulpits* demean themselvs; I dare affirm, that if our Separating people would be but perswaded to make their own ears judges, and for some time deign to be their Auditors, if they could also leave all prejudice behinde them, they would confess that they cannot in any of their private Meetings, at least *better* spend their time. I am sure it must be their *own* fault, if their experience doth not convince them, that there are no Preachers by whom they may gain more real profit. For none can give their hearers better instructions, or back them

them on with more cogent and effectual motives and arguments than *they* do. I have my ſelf been as conſtant a hearer of them (before I betook my ſelf to this ſolitary way of living) as any man: but never was my judgement more convinced, my will perſwaded, nor my affections more powerfully wrought upon, by any Sermons than by theirs. I found that in their Diſcourſes generally, they handled thoſe ſubjects that are of weightieſt and moſt neceſſary importance: I mean ſuch as have the greateſt influence into the reformation of mens lives, and purification of their ſouls: Nor had I ever ſo lovely an *idæa* of the divine *nature*, which is the moſt powerful incentive to obedience to the divine *will*, nor ſo clear a ſenſe of the excellency of the Chriſtian Religion, the Reaſonableneſs of its precepts, the nobleneſs and generoſity of its deſigne, and its admirable fitneſs for the

Part I. the accomplishment of it; as, through the blessing of God, I have gained by the hearing of these men.

XIV. *Of their preaching the Reasonableness of the Christian precepts.*

Philal. You say, *Theophilus*, that you have gained by these men a clearer sense of the Reasonableness of the Gospel-precepts; there are many now-a-days that will con a Preacher little thanks, for insisting on that Topick: for they tell us very weakly, that onely *Faith* is to be set on work in matters of Religion, not *Reason*.

XV. *Of the use of Reason in matters of Religion.*

Theoph. Very weakly indeed: it seems those men would have us believe our Religion we know not why; and so we shall be *wise* believers in the mean time. Were I of their opinion, I doubt I should be shrewdly tempted to prefer no one Religion before another; and to think none so absurd, as that I should need to stick, upon that account, at entertaining it.

Philal. I greatly fear that *Mahometanism*

metaniſm it ſelf would bid as fair for my belief, as Chriſtianity, did I think as they do. But I am ſo far from imagining that *Reaſon* hath nothing to do in Religion, that I am moſt aſſured, that it is no-where to ſo good purpoſe employed as it is there. But how do you underſtand that place, which theſe enemies of Reaſon, I think, lay the *greateſt* ſtreſs on, in their cavils againſt it, *viz.* *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are fooliſhneſs to him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned.* Where, by the ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος, which is (I know not why) tranſlated the *natural man*, they underſtand the *Rational*; or as ſome of them love to word it, the *Souly man*, but mean the ſame thing.

Part I.

XVI. 1 Cor. 2. 14. *conſidered.*

Theoph. Thoſe words of S. *Paul* are ſtrangely miſunderſtood by them; nor is there any thing in them

Part I. them, that, with the leaſt ſhew of probability, tends to ſerve thoſe mens abſurd Hypotheſis. For the word ψύχικος doth properly ſignifie *Animalis*; and this word never ſignifieth a *Souly man* in their ſenſe, but in the quite contrary. For an *Animal man* is ſuch a one, as gives himſelf up to the government of his inferiour Faculties; or a *carnal ſenſual man*: ſo that he is ſo far from being a man of Reaſon, that he is moſt irrational. 'Tis ſuch a man as this, that the Apoſtle ſaith, *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; he being drowned in ſenſuality, can have no *guſto* of, cannot reliſh ſuch things; that is, while he remains ſo. *They are fooliſhneſs unto him, neither can he know them*; he can have no right underſtanding, no clear perception of them; and they ſound in his ears like very *odde* things alſo. And it is to be imputed to *this*, that he underſtands by his *Affections*

more

more than by his *Reaſon*; like the Wolf in the Fable, that went to School to learn to Spell, whatſoever letters were told him, becauſe he minded nothing but his belly, he could never make any thing but *Agnus* of them. *He cannot know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned*; that is, by vertue of a higher principle than that which is predominant in this man; who is, as was ſaid, a meer fleſhly wretch. So that this place is ſo far from condemning the uſe of Reaſon in the matters of our Faith, that the *neceſſity* thereof in thoſe things is rather to be *concluded* from it; and that men cannot receive the things of Gods Spirit, till by the Aſſiſtance thereof, their Reaſon hath regained its authority, and be able to keep under their bruitiſh affections. Part I.

Philal. But they ſay, that we muſt believe the Scriptures, not becauſe Reaſon tells us they are true,

Part I. true, but becauſe they are Gods Word.

Theoph. I perceive you are hard put to it, to retain your wonted gravity in propounding this Objection; but however, I will very gravely anſwer you. If we muſt believe the Scriptures becauſe they are Gods Word, then I trow there is a reaſon on which we are to found our Faith, and that a good one too. But again, why muſt we believe what God ſaith to be true? muſt we believe this becauſe we believe it? None ſure will ſpeak ſo abſurdly: but whatſoever anſwer theſe men will give to that Queſtion, it is apparent that this is grounded upon a principle of *Reaſon* alſo, than which there is none more evident, *viz. That God cannot lye.*

Philal. I preſume that they themſelvs would give that anſwer.

Theoph. Then they would give another Reaſon, and ſo ſtill contradict

tradict their own Doctrine.

Philal. But they will tell you, that all is at last resolved into Gods meer testimony: for we must believe that he cannot lye, because he himself hath said so.

Theoph. And what if he had never said so? what they would do I will not undertake to conjecture; but *I* should not therefore have one jot the less believed it. For Gods saying that he cannot lye, cannot be a sufficient argument to me to believe it, if I did not know that to lye is unworthy of God, and dis-becoming him: for how else could I tell, but that he designed to deceive me in that very saying that he cannot lye? This therefore is the reason why I doubt not of that great truth, because the reason of my minde tells me, that God must be a Being absolutely perfect, or he can't be God; and being so, it tells me that he cannot be without any

moral,

Part I. *moral*, no more than *physical* perfections; and to *lye*, the same Reason of my minde assures me, is a moral imperfection.

Philal. This no man can once doubt, that hath to any purpose employed his considerative faculty. But to personate these stiff opposers of Reason a little farther. To what purpose is it to go about to demonstrate the Reasonableness of the Christian precepts, when it is once taken for granted, that they are divine? For nothing is more undoubted, than that whatsoever God commands, is therefore to be done, because he commands it.

Theoph. That is a truth beyond all dispute; and, by the way, let me tell you it is so, because nothing is more highly reasonable, than that God must be obeyed in all things. But however, I would have these men know, that to demonstrate the Reasonableness of the duties of Chri-

Part I.

Christianity, is to do excellent service to the Christian Religion: for, First, it is no small confirmation of our Faith in the truth thereof, to understand the Reasonableness of what is therein enjoyned. I remember a good saying of *Origen* to this purpose; saith he to *Celsus*, in his third Book against him, *See whether or no the agreeableness of the precepts of our Faith with the common notions of humane nature, be not that which hath caused them to to be so readily entertained, by the ingenuous hearers of them.* And I must profess to you, *Philalethes*, that I lay no less weight upon the *goodness* that my Reason apprehendeth in the Doctrine the Gospel containeth, than upon the *Miracles* whereby 'twas confirmed. Nor do I believe the Miracles unaccompanied with that other consideration, a sufficiently-satisfying Argument that our Saviour was sent from God, as infinite-

XVII. *One advantage that is gotten by demonstrating the Reasonableness of Christian duties.*

XVIII. *The consideration of the goodness of the doctrine of the Gospel necessary to accompany that of Miracles, to prove its divine authority.*

Part I. nitely wonderful as they were: but both theſe together moſt fully demonſtrate to us that Propoſition, and neither ſingly and abſtracted from each other.

Philal. I have, in this particular, thought as you do, ever ſince I well conſidered the three or four firſt verſes of the 13th Chapter of *Deuteronomy*; where God, by *Moſes*, ſaith thus to the children of *Iſrael*: *If there ariſe among you a Prophet, or a Dreamer of dreams; and giveth thee a ſigne or a wonder; and the ſigne or the wonder come to paſs, whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let us go after other gods, and let us ſerve them: thou ſhalt not hearken unto the words of that Prophet, or that Dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God, with all your heart, and with all your ſoul*, &c.

Theoph. That place is to very good

good purpose quoted by you; and these two things are plainly to be gathered from it: Part I.

First, That we are to consider the Doctrine it self, before we believe it to be of God, as well as the means of its confirmation.

Secondly, That God, for certain Reasons, may suffer wonders to be wrought, that is, such things as no man can give account how they should be effected by natural means, for the confirmation of a false Doctrine. And you have from thence rationally concluded what I now said, *viz.* That the goodness of the Doctrine is necessary to go along with the consideration of the Miracles whereby it was confirmed, to make them such an Argument as we may reasonably desire to induce us to entertain it as coming from God, and to receive *him* as Gods Son that brings it.

By the goodness of the Doctrine

Part I. I mean at leaſt its *negative* goodneſs; and ſay, that we ought to ſee that there be nothing in it, that is plainly unworthy of God to revele, or that containeth a manifeſt contradiction to any of his Attributes: but when *poſitive* goodneſs is alſo therein obſervable; that is, a high congruity and agreeableneſs with the Divine perfections; ſuch Doctrines make Miracles a more abundantly ſtrong argument, that the Preacher of them is no Impoſtor, but that he came from heaven upon Gods Meſſage.

Philal. But there are Learned men, that, diſtinguiſhing betwixt Miracles and Wonders, aſſert that the *former* are ſufficient motives of Credibility, though not the *latter.*

Theoph. Though theſe two ought to be diſtinguiſhed, yet I conceive, *that* diſtinction will ſignifie very little when applyed to this matter. For I cannot queſtion, but that it may

may lie within the compaſs of Evil Spirits power, to play ſuch Feats as no mortal man, though they ſhould be but *Wonders*, can be ſagacious and quick-ſighted enough to diſcern them from real *Miracles*. But when a perſon doth not onely perform moſt marveilous *works*, but alſo delivereth the moſt excellent *doctrine*, we have the greateſt aſſurance that can be from both together, that he came on Gods errand, and that the Religion he brought with him hath the Majeſtie of Heaven for its Author. We have reaſon to be no leſs aſſured of it, than that God is good: it being utterly unconceivable, that he ſhould lay before us ſuch an invincible Temptation to believe a Cheat and Falſity. Part I.

Philal. But there are thoſe, you know, that ſeem by their diſcourſe to lay no weight either upon the Miracles, or excellencie of the Doctrine; and are heard to cry up one-

Part I.

XIX. *Of the teſtimony of the Spirit to the truth of Scripture.*

ly the Teſtimony of the Spirit, as an Argument of the truth of Chriſtianity, and of the divine Authority of thoſe Books that contain it.

Theoph. There are ſo, *Philalethes*; but why do they diſtinguiſh between Miracles, and the Teſtimony of the Spirit? They are one and the ſame, without all doubt: for were they not performed by the power of the Holy Ghoſt? And therefore they were his Teſtimony or atteſtation to the truth of the Goſpel.

Philal. But they mean an *internal* Teſtimony, or a ſecret powerful perſwaſion wrought *immediately*, in the ſouls of men, by the Holy Ghoſt.

Theoph. But thoſe that ſay, that Credit cannot be given to the truth of the Goſpel without this, make the Devils greater Unbelievers than we are from Scripture aſſured they are. And moreover, they ſeem to me

to

to assert that Christ and his Apostles might have spared *their* mighty works: for who will deny that the Spirits immediate testimony is alone abundantly sufficient for that purpose? But besides, those that talk thus, do apparently run in as gross a Circle, as that we accuse the Papists of. For as *they* prove the Scriptures by their Church, and their Church by the Scriptures; so *these* prove the Scriptures by this Testimony of the Holy Ghost, but then cannot prove so much as that there is any such person, but by the Scriptures. And once more, if there be any truth in this opinion, there is nothing to be done for the conviction of Infidels; for this internal Testimony can be an Argument to none but those that have it. Part I.

Philal. This I once urged to a certain Divine, who stiffly maintained that Conceit, and was angry with those that went about to prove

Part I.

the Authority of the Scriptures the other way; and he readily replied, that he knew no means to be used for the conviction of unbelievers, but *praying* for them.

Theoph. I commend that Gentlemans *ingenuity* in that concession; but nothing could be said more dishonourable to our excellent Religion, or that tends more to expose it to the scorn and contempt of those that bear no good-will to it.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, do you think then, that there is no such thing as this inward Testimony?

XX. Theophilus *his opinion concerning the inward testimony of the Spirit.*

Theoph. All I think as to this matter, I will briefly tell you. I say that the external and rational Motives of Credibility are as sufficient to give unprejudiced persons an undoubted belief of the truth of our Religion; as any rational Arguments are to perswade a man of the truth of any thing, he desireth satisfaction concerning: But yet because

cauſe our Grand Adverſary uſeth all Arts to make it as much ſuſpected as may be, and to ſhake our faith therein; and we are moreover in regard of the Contrariety of our Religion to our carnal and fleſhly intereſts very apt to be ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, (and we are not eaſily brought fully to believe what we would not have true) God is ready without all queſtion, to aſſiſt our weakneſs by his grace and Spirit, in this as well as other particulars, when humbly ſought to: but we have no reaſon to think that he doth this *ordinarily* in an immediate manner, but by bleſſing the uſe of means, *i. e.* the conſideration of the motives he hath given us to believe: And that he confirms our Faith, by giving us to ſee ſuch ſtrongly-convincing demonſtration in thoſe Arguments, and by ſo *cloſely* applying the evidence of them to our underſtandings, as that they come

Part I.

come to be even *perfectly* over-pow-er'd, and against all opposition to have full assent, and such as hath a powerful influence upon our practice, as it were, even *forced* from them. But if all the external motives will not make *one sufficient* Argument to perswade to assent, how could they render the unbelieving Jews inexcusable, as our Saviour several times assured them they would? Nay, how then could he *marvail* (as we read he did) at their unbelief?

Philal. But they will tell you, that to assent to the truth of the Scriptures from the forementioned motives, is no *divine* Faith.

XXI. *The believing of divine things a divine Faith, whatever the motives thereunto are.*

Theoph. But I dare tell them, that the believing of Divine things is a divine Faith, let the motives inducing thereunto be what they will; and that it is no unusual thing for the *Act* to receive its denomination from its *Object*. But with a divine Faith

Faith in *their* ſenſe alſo, *we* no leſs than *they*, believe what is contained in the Scriptures true; *viz.* becauſe God that cannot lye hath reveled it: but that he hath *indeed* reveled it, the Miracles, as was ſaid, whereby this is confirmed; and the goodneſs of the Doctrine, (to which I may adde alſo, the completion of Prophecies, as being of no leſs conſideration than the Miracles) do aſſure us. And again, that ſuch Miracles as are recorded, were really wrought for the confirmation of the Goſpel, and likewiſe that the Doctrine contained in our Books, is that Goſpel that was confirmed by them; we may be convinced by as undeniable Arguments, as any matters of *fact* men have not ſeen with their own eyes can be proved by; and *ſo* undeniable, that he muſt needs be a moſt unreaſonable perſon, that requires better. Nay, he muſt reſolve, if he will be conſiſtent with

Part I.

Part I. with himself, to believe nothing he hath not himself seen. I will adde too, that whoever he be that is dissatisfied as to this matter, he doth *undoubtedly* believe hundreds of things, and thinks he should be unwise in questioning them, that have not the quarter part of the evidence that this hath; nay, I may say, not the twentieth part. If they please, *Philalethes*, to call it a *humane* faith to believe matters of fact upon the account of Tradition, I will not contend with them, but tell them plainly, that I like it never a jot the worse for being so; nor can I understand how any *wise* man should. But yet take notice too, that such a *degree* of faith concerning these matters of *fact* also, as hath a powerful operation upon our lives and souls, is imputed by *us*, no less than by *them*, to the grace of God, and his Holy Spirit; though not as operating in us in an *immediate* manner,

ner, as I said, *ordinarily*; but in making the means effectual; and I hope they will acknowledge *this*, in the *best* of senses, a *Divine* faith. Part I.

Philal. But they say, that onely a *moral* certainty can result from the evidence that is in the most uninterrupted and universal Tradition; and therefore how *closely* soever you tell us the Spirit of God applieth that evidence, this way of yours tends to make men no better than *morally* certain of the truth of our Religion. XXII. *Of moral certainty.*

Theoph. What a fault *that* is! our certainty thereof may be perfectly *undoubted*, as *moral* as it is. And I fear not to declare, that I do not desire to be more *undoubtedly* assured that there were such persons as our Saviour and his Apostles, that they performed such works, and preached such Doctrines as we have on Record; and that the Books we call *Canonical*, were written by those

Part I.

thoſe whoſe names they bear, than I have cauſe to be and am that there were ſuch great Conquerors as *Alexander* and *Julius Cæſar*, which yet liv'd before our Saviour; or that thoſe which paſs for *Tully*'s Orations were *really* (for the *ſubſtance* of them at leaſt) *his*, which yet are elder than the Goſpel: but for all that my certainty of theſe things can be no more than *moral*; yet I do notwithſtanding no more doubt of them, than I do of thoſe things that are plainly objected to my Senſes; for I do not *at all* doubt of them; and I ſhould be laugh'd at as an arrant fool, if I did; but ſhould I *deny* them, I ſhould be thought a mad-man by all wiſe people. And yet let me tell you, that we have from Tradition a *greater* certainty, in ſome reſpect, of moſt of *thoſe* particulars, than we have of *theſe*: for it hath been the intereſt of *many* that *thoſe* ſhould be falſe, but *ſo* hath

See the Learned Dr. *Stillingfleets* excellent Anſwer to the Lo. Archbp of *Canterbury*'s Adverſary, p. 206.

hath it not been of *any* that *these* ſhould be ſo. But the greateſt enemies of the Chriſtian Religion have not ſo much as attempted to diſprove thoſe, nay have taken all for *granted*, except one or two Miracles.

Philal. I have but a Moral aſſurance that there is ſuch a City as *Rome* or *Venice*; or that there were ſuch perſons as Queen *Elizabeth* and King *James*: yet I ſhould be a Brute, did I more queſtion, whether there are ſuch Cities, or were ſuch perſons, than I do, whether there be ſuch a place as *London* or *Briſtol*, where I have ſeveral times been, or whether there are ſuch men as *Theophilus* and *Philalethes*.

Theoph. To be ſure, ſo you would. Well, I wiſh that thoſe men would ſhew us a more certain way of conviction concerning this matter of weightieſt importance; and then ſee whether we would not,

Part I.

not, with great thanks, leave ours for it. But I fear me, in stead of so doing, should we give up our selves to their conduct, they would most sadly bewilder us; and in stead of setled and unshaken believers, make mere *Scepticks* of us, or what is worse.

XXIII. *Of the Scriptures bearing testimony to it self.*

Philal. There are others, *Theophilus*, that say that the Scripture is sufficiently able to convince men of its Divine authority, by the witness it can give to it self; or, to use their own Metaphorical expression, by the resplendency of its own light. So that he doth enough in order to his believing it to be Gods Word, that doth but acquaint himself with the contents thereof; which I think follows from that opinion.

Theoph. If these understand what they say, there is no difference betwixt *them* and *us*: for the Miracles and Goodness of the Doctrine, we prove the Scriptures Authority by,

by, we fetch onely out of the Scriptures themselvs. And therefore, Part I. supposing we believe the matters of fact therein written, we say as they do, that we need no Argument to prove them Divine, but what is therein included. But if their meaning be, (as by their manner of expressing themselvs one would think it should) that there is such a light in Scripture, as immediately operates upon mens mindes, as proper light doth on the Optick nerves, there can be nothing said more inconsiderately. For mens understandings cannot discern the truth of things by immediate intuition, but onely in a discursive manner; that is, by such reasons and arguments as perswade to assent. And besides, if that be true, not onely what you concluded from thence is so also, *viz. that 'tis enough, in order to our believing it, to acquaint our selvs with the contents thereof*; but like-

Part I. wiſe that 'tis altogether impoſſible, that any man ſhould *read* the Scriptures, and not *believe* them, ſuppoſing he be *compos mentis*, and underſtands what he reads. But to convince us that this is not ſo, I fear there are very many ſad inſtances, & have too good ground for my fears.

Well, *Philalethes*, it is time to have done with the Firſt Advantage, that I told you is gotten, by having the Reaſonableneſs of the precepts of the Goſpel demonſtrated to us, *viz. That it is no ſmall confirmation of our faith in the truth thereof.*

XXIV. *A ſecond Advantage gotten by demonſtrating the reaſonableneſs of the precepts of the Goſpel.*

Secondly, Another Advantage we get hereby is, that by this means we learn the incomparable excellencie of our Saviours Religion; not to ſay above the Heathen Gods impoſitions on their worſhippers, (their Religion being, for a great part, not onely moſt ridiculous, but alſo full of unnatural villainy and filthineſs,

ſuch

such as a modeſt tongue would find it difficult to utter, and chaſte ears to hear: Witneſs the Rites of *Cybele*, the Feaſts of *Bacchus*, *Flora*, *Venus* and *Priapus*; and likewiſe 'twas full of Cruelty and bloudy Tyranny) I ſay, paſſing by the Religion of the Heathens, as not worthy to be named on the ſame day with that of the Goſpel; we do by this means underſtand the incomparable excellencie of our Saviours Religion, even above *that* given by God himſelf to his own people the *Iſraelites*, under the *Moſaical diſpenſation*. For, we know, it conſiſted of almoſt innumerable Injunctions, the reaſon of which is not at all obvious. We may ſee our way before us, in obeying Goſpel-Precepts; *they* are enjoyned becauſe *good*, whereas *theſe* were *good* onely becauſe enjoyned. And though we may gueſs at reaſons for Gods giving thoſe people ſuch a kinde of Religi-

Part I.

Part I. on in the general, yet we can ſay nothing for moſt of the particular inſtances of obedience, but that it was the divine will to make choice of them. They were in themſelvs of a perfectly-indifferent nature, and neither good nor evil; nor had they any thing, I ſay, that we know of, to commend them, and ſet them off, but the meer Legiſlators pleaſure. Now except we underſtand the vaſt difference betwixt the Law and the Goſpel; and how greatly the later, eſpecially in this point of *Reaſonableneſs*, excels the former; we ſhall be inſenſible of that much larger ſhare *we* have in the Goodneſs of God, than the *Jews* had, and ſo want a moſt exciting motive to chearful obedience to him, in the preſent notices of his will we are under the obligation of.

Philal. What you ſay, is too evident to be denied, or ſo much as diſputed: but I pray inform me more

more particularly, what you mean, when you ſay that the Precepts of the Goſpel are highly reaſonable. Part I.

XXV. *In what ſence the precepts of the Goſpel are highly reaſonable.*

Theoph. You have leſs need, *Philalethes*, than moſt I know, to ask me that Queſtion; but yet becauſe I am gotten into a vein of talking, I will ſatisfie you, for diſcourſe ſake, in that demand. I mean, that they are ſuch, as our Reaſon tells us are highly fitting, and becoming us; conſidering what kinde of creatures we are, and the Circumſtances and Relations we ſtand in, to God, our ſelvs, and each other. Nay, they are *ſo* becoming us, that our Reaſon will alſo aſſure us, that the contrary are no leſs unworthy of us.

Philal. But before you proceed farther, give me leave ſo far to interrupt you, as to deſire a clear deſcription of Reaſon from you. Whatever *I* do, I can ſcarcely think that the great Decryers of it, do diſtinctly underſtand what it is.

Part I.

Theoph. If they did, I cannot imagine what ſhould incline them to ſuch extravagant and ſtrange prattle, as is heard from them. But to your Queſtion: *Reaſon is that power, whereby men are enabled to draw clear Inferences from evident Principles.* And therefore when the Preachers we are diſcourſing of, and others, demonſtrate the reaſonableneſs of the Precepts of the Goſpel; they prove that there are thoſe ſelf-evident Principles, from whence what the Goſpel requires may be inferred to be our duty, although God had never declared his minde concerning them.

XXVI. *A deſcription of Reaſon.*

Philal. But ſurely they cannot think, that there are no precepts in the Chriſtian Religion, but what are ſuch: what ſay you to thoſe that enjoyn the two Sacraments?

Theoph. I will, in *ſhort*, tell you all that, I think, is neceſſary to be ſaid in this matter, in theſe two Propoſitions. Firſt,

Part I.

XXVII. *The first Propositi-on, shewing in what sence the precepts of the Gospel are reasonable: with a brief demonstration that they are so.*

First, *All those things, wherein doth consist the substance of the Christian Religion, are good, and necessary in themselvs to be done; and the contrary evil, and necessary in themselvs to be avoided.* Those are such, as it would be a contradiction to suppose them not our duty; considering, as was said, what creatures we are, and our several Circumstances and Relations; and so would it be to suppose *these* not disbecoming us, and unworthy of us. Our Saviour, you know, sums up our whole duty in the love of God, and our Neighbour; the substance of which, (as is easie to be known by enumerating particulars) is reducible to these two Heads; nay to the *former*, namely the love of God. And there is no Principle we do more naturally assent to, than that he, *in whom we live, move, and have our being*; from whom we receive all we enjoy, and expect all that we can hope for

Part I.

of good; should be beloved by us, nay, and made also the object of our chief love. And an imitation of all Gods imitable perfections, is a necessary consequent of such a love of God; such as his Holiness, Justice, Goodness. *Hierocles* hath told us, that whom a man loves, he will as much as lyeth in him imitate; and that therefore it is necessary, that there should be not onely θείας γνῶσις, *the knowledge of Gods nature and essence*; but also ἡ πρὸς αὐτὸν κατὰ δύναμιν ἐξομοίωσις, *All possible likeness thereunto*. Now the imitation of the Divine Nature, is the whole designe of the Christian Religion; (which St. *Gregory Nyssen* makes to be its very definition) as no one that considératively reads the Books wherein it is contained, can at all doubt.

Ὁν γὰρ ἀγαπᾷ τις μιμεῖται, &c. p 22.

XXVIII. *The designe of the Christian Religion.*

XXIX. *The second Proposition.*

Secondly: *The other duties of the Gospel, which are but few, are imposed as* helps *to the performance of* those *forementioned.* They are not

not required for themſelvs, but for the ſake of the great Eſſentials of Religion. And it may be eaſily made good, that there are none of them of a meerly poſitive nature, except the two Sacraments: which yet are appointed for very great ends and purpoſes; and are moſt excellent helps to the attaining of true holineſs, and *that* wherein the power and life of Religion conſiſteth; and not onely tryals of obedience. Meditation, Prayer, Reading and Hearing Gods Word, the obſervation of the Lords day, good Conference, *&c.* are in *themſelvs* helps; and Baptiſm, and the Lords Supper are *ſo*, through the divine ordination. And *indeed*, to ſpeak properly, they are no leſs our *priviledge* than our duty; as being Seals of Gods Covenant, and Pledges to aſſure us of the divine grace; for which we are no leſs obliged to him, than we are for his gracious Promiſes. *Philal.*

Philal. But what think you of believing in Christ Jesus for the Remission of Sins? could *Reason* ever have prompted this, as mens duty?

Theoph. Yes, as soon as any thing enjoyned in the Gospel, when once it was demonstrated, that *him* hath God exalted to be our Prince and Saviour. Men would have, of themselvs, concluded Faith in him their duty, when they were convinced of that truth, though there had been no precept to make it so. Which is so *plain*, that I shall disparage your intellectuals in using more words to clear it to you.

Philal. It is indeed so plain, that I am ashamed I ask'd the Question.

Theoph. But if you please, *Philalethes*, I will more particularly, and distinctly, though very briefly, demonstrate that the duties of the Gospel are such, as *Reason* (would we consult it) would prompt to us.

Philal.

Part I.

Philal. You cannot ſhew the ſtrength of your *own* Reaſon upon a nobler Subject.

Theoph. A very ſmall pittance of it, that is, ſo little as I am maſter of, is ſufficient to enable any one with eaſe to perform this ſucceſsfully. Now then, as our Saviour referreth our whole duty to two Heads, *viz.* the love of *God*, and our *Neighbour*: ſo doth the Apoſtle to three; *Sobriety*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Godlineſs*. Now for *Godlineſs*, which contains all our duty immediately relating to God; all the inſtances thereof, which the Goſpel enjoyns, may be learnt by improving but that one natural Principle of Gods exiſtence; and that thus. There being a God, he muſt neceſſarily be abſolutely perfect: He, being abſolutely perfect, is to be acknowledged the Creator, Preſerver, Benefactor, and Governour of the whole world: for it is unreaſonable to attribute our Creation,

XXX. *A more particular demonſtration of the Reaſonableneſs of the Goſpel-precepts.*

Part I. tion, preservation, &c. to any besides such a Being. And then, God having all perfections in himself, and being *so* related to us; this will necessarily follow, that we ought to make him the object of our highest Admiration, our greatest love; we ought to offer up Sacrifices of Prayer and Praises to him, to trust in him, and depend upon him, in all our ways to acknowledge him; chearfully to do what he commands, patiently to submit to his dispose, &c. And there is no duty immediately relating to God, but is in those included; setting aside that of doing what he commands; for that alone takes in our whole duty in reference, not onely to God, but also to our Neighbour and our Selvs. God being such a one in himself, and to the world, as you heard; this *must* be eternally true, that it is the duty of all Reasonable creatures, to carry themselvs towards him as was

shewn.

ſhewn. There is ſo cloſe a connexion, between *thoſe* Premiſes, and *theſe* Concluſions; that a man cannot believe the one, and (except he were ſtark mad) doubt the other. We cannot more eaſily apprehend this Argument to be neceſſarily true, *viz. This Figure is a Circle, therefore all its parts are equally diſtant from the Center*; than this, *God is our Creator, Preſerver*, &c. *therefore we ought ſo as was now ſaid, to behave our ſelves towards him.* Nay, we can hardly think of *that premiſs*, but *this concluſion* will come into our mindes whether we will or no.

And then for *Righteouſneſs*, which implieth our duty to our Neighbour; that Rule of our Saviour, *What ye would that men ſhould do to you, that do ye to them*; (which *Severus* expreſſeth in Negative terms, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*) it is as ſelf-evident a Prin-

Part I. Principle, as any is to be found in Morals. And *this* will teach us to be juſt, moſt ſeverely juſt to every body; and to be kinde and merciful to thoſe that are in need: Now theſe two include all that the Goſpel requires in reference to one another.

And then for *Sobriety*, that comprehendeth our whole duty to our ſelvs. The meer principle of Self-love will teach a man, that he may not be intemperate in any kinde; he by this means abuſing himſelf. And the very knowledge of our ſelvs, and what excellent creatures we are, will convince us that we ought not to ſet our heart upon, or place our happineſs in any earthly thing. Therefore, this was one Rule, among the ſeveral excellent ones in the *Pythagoræan* Golden Verſes;

——Πάντων δ' μάλιστα αἰδοῖο σεαυτόν·
Above all things Revere thy ſelf.

There is no man but does or may know, that his ſoul is too Noble a crea-

creature to glut it ſelf with baſe Corporeal Pleaſures; and that his underſtanding is too ſublime a faculty to ſubject it ſelf to his brutiſh appetite: And that God, as the Philoſopher ſpeaks, indued him with *that*, to be ὁ ἄρχων, *A Prince and Ruler within him*; and with *this*, to be τὸ ἀρχόμενον, *A Subject and Ruled*; to be the Servant, not Maſter of his Minde. There is no man but *feels* his ſoul too big for theſe terreſtrial things, and that they are never able to fill its vaſt capacities. Now what are we enjoyned in the Chriſtian Religion, as relating to our ſelves, but is to be reduced to one of theſe, nay to this one head of inordinate affection? And in ſhort, (for I am ſenſible that we have protracted our diſcourſe upon this Subject to too great a length) I know no duties enjoyned in the Goſpel, beſides that of Faith in Chriſt, and the two Sacraments, but may be found, as to the

Part I.

the substance of them, at least *commended* as *noble perfections*, in some one or other of the Heathenish writings; as may be particularly shewn, but that it will take up too much time.

XXXI. *Almost all the duties enjoyned in the Gospel commended by Heathens.*

Philal. What say you to meek bearing, and putting up affronts; but especially, to *loving malicious enemies*, and *rendering good for evil?*

Theoph. Both these may be found in them; if not under the notion of indispensable duties, yet as greatly becoming us, most highly commendable, and significations of a *bravely* generous and virtuous Minde. The instances of the former, are *so* many, that you cannot be a stranger to them; nor any that have read but that little Book (that is worn out in School-boys hands) *Tully's Offices.* Nay, *Plato* brings in *Socrates* speaking of it, as that to which all men are absolutely obliged. *Injury*, saith he, *is to be done by no means*, *verily*

ly by no means, nor may it be repayed to him that doth an injury, as the vulgar think, for that it is to be committed upon no pretence. And what think you of that ſpeech of *Cato : If an Aſs kicks me, ſhall I again kick him ?* He thereby intimated, that it was unworthy of him to be revengeful; at leaſt towards *ſome* ſort of people. And as to the later, I remember that *Origen* in his eighth Book againſt *Celſus* gives two notable inſtances of it : the one of *Lycurgus*, and the other of *Zeno*. One being delivered into the hands of *Lycurgus*, that had put out one of his eyes, he was ſo far from revenging the injury, as very great as it was, that he never left giving him wholſome Counſel, till he had made him in love with Philoſophy. And he brings in *Zeno* making this Reply to his enemy, that ſaid, *Let me periſh if I do thee not a miſchief*; viz. *And let me periſh if I do not reconcile thee* Part I.

Part I. *to me.* Both theſe ſhew ſufficiently what thoſe Heathens thought of returning good for evil.

Philal. But have you obſerved, that the Heathens give Rules for the regulation of mens thoughts and affections, as well as words and actions?

Theoph. Why do you ask me that Queſtion? For you very well know that they abound with them, as ignorant as you are pleaſed to make your ſelf.

Philal. I was (I confeſs) guilty of great inconſiderateneſs in putting that Queſtion to you.

Theoph. And you are not to learn that divers of them lead men to good *ends* in their vertuous actions. And that, placing mans ſupreme happineſs in the enjoyment of God, they teach us to make that our great deſigne.

Philal. I have much obſerved it, and eſpecially in the Writings of the

Pla-

Platonists. And moreover, that in their Moral discourses they tell us that it is our duty to perform good actions out of love to Goodness; and condemn base ends, and particularly some of them even that of applause, and a great Name, as much as some others allow of it, and commend it too. But have you found that any of them teach men to act out of Love to God, and to make his Glory their last end?

Part I.

Theoph. These two you ought not to have distinguished from each other. Now though I do not remember the later in any of them, as you word it, yet the former I do. The forementioned *Hierocles* speaking of Piety or Love to God, hath this saying: *With this every thing is pleasing to God, but without this nothing.* And he brings in *Apollo* speaking thus, to one that offered an Hecatomb to him, but with no pious minde;

Μετ' αὐτῆς γὰρ πάντα θεοφιλῆ, χωρὶς αὐτῆς οὐδὲν θεοφίλεον, &c. p. 26.

Ἀλλά μοι εὐαδὲς χύδεος φρενὸς Ἑρμογένες.

Thine hundred Oxen I leſs kindly take
Than Poor but Pious Hermions *Barley-cake.*

But I need not trouble you with inſtances to this purpoſe; for there is nothing more *plainly* agreeable to Reaſon, than that we ought to act principally out of love to God; our obligations to him being beyond all expreſſion and conception great. Any man may ſee this, that hath not loſt all ſenſe of Gratitude; which Principle how any ſhould quite extirpate out of their ſouls, I cannot underſtand; it being, I think, not much leſs deeply rooted there, than that of ſelf-love; and obſervable in *Brutes* as well as *men*.

Philal. But yet I conceive that to act out of love to *God*, and out of love to *Goodneſs*, are much the ſame.

Theoph. Materially they are; Goodneſs being the very nature of God. But 'tis certain that nothing argueth a man to be ſo like to God, as doth doing

doing vertuouſly from this principle of love to Goodneſs. Part I.

Philal. Nor do the holy Scriptures ſeem to me, to make any nice diſtinction between deſigning the enjoyment of God as our ſupreme happineſs, and making his glory our laſt End.

Theoph. No, ſurely, they do not; and I wiſh that no good people were more Critical in ſo doing, than the Scriptures are; by this means would many free themſelves from a great deal of needleſs trouble they are apt to caſt themſelvs down with.

Philal. I have ſometimes wondered greatly, how Heathens ſhould come by ſuch excellent notions, in matters of Religion; but I ſhould now be tempted to account it matter of Admiration, ſhould they all have been ignorant of them.

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I do really think, that it is ſo far from being difficult to conceive, how

Part I. thoſe that never ſaw the Bible ſhould have ſuch conceptions; that it would be rather ſo, how thoſe of them that, through the goodneſs of God, were emerged out of thoſe groſs notions of the Deity, into which the generality of Mankinde were ſunk, and that made uſe of their intellectuals, and were conſiderative, ſhould not have them.

XXXII. *Thoſe vindicated from making the Goſpel but little better than a mere natural Religion, that aſſert that Reaſon alone is able to prompt to us moſt of the duties therein enjoyned.*

Philal. But doth not what hath been ſaid tend to diſparage the Goſpel, and make it the very ſame, excepting in two or three precepts, with a meer Natural Religion?

Theoph. I would rather impoſe an eternal ſilence upon my tongue, and pluck it out by the roots too, than once utter a ſyllable to ſuch a miſchievous purpoſe. But I am ſo far from being conſcious to my ſelf that what hath been ſaid doth tend to the *debaſing* of the Chriſtian Religion, that, I know, it highly conduceth to its *commendation*.

But

But whereas you asked, whether to assert that there are scarcely any duties therein enjoyned, but what mens *Reason* alone, were it well consulted, might suggest so to be, be not to make it a meer Natural Religion: To that I answer, that you did not consider, that the Gospel is not made up altogether of *agenda*, or *things to be done*; whereas *these*, you know, are but a part of it: There are, besides, relations of matters of fact, and many things to be *known*, and points of *meer* belief, which yet have an influence upon practice too: There are abundance of Promises as well as Precepts; and stupendious expressions of Gods love to Mankinde therein declared; all which we are beholden to *Revelation* alone for the knowledge of. But, in short, I assert these two things concerning the Gospel, which do highly tend to the magnifying of it infinitely above any Religion that was ever Part I.

Part I. embraced by the ſons of men.

XXXIII. *Wherein the Goſpel excelleth all other Religions.*

Firſt, That it containeth all thoſe excellent Precepts, that are ſcattered here and there very thinly among much Traſh and Rubbiſh in other Books, ſome in one, and ſome in another; and moreover, that there is found therein whatſoever may be diſcovered by Reaſon to be becoming and worthy of Mankinde; which are all there expreſſed, one where or other, in a moſt plain and intelligible manner. And were there no more in the Goſpel than *this*, we ſhould be infinitely obliged to God for it: in that, what the Heathens took pains for, and by the exerciſe of their diſcurſive faculty were, or might have been acquainted with; we have laid before our eyes, and the knowledge thereof need coſt us no more pains, than Reading the Scriptures will put us to. Leſt we ſhould either be too *ſlothful* to acquire the knowledge of our whole duty,

duty, by drawing inferences from premiſes, and gathering one thing from another; or any of us too *weak headed* to do this ſucceſsfully; God hath out of his abundant kindneſs, aſſured us thereof from his own mouth; which we have all great cauſe to eſteem, as a moſt exceedingly great Priviledge. But this is but little in compariſon of what is next to be ſaid. Part I.

Secondly, The Goſpel gives far greater helps to the performance of our duty; and enforceth its precepts with infinitely ſtronger, and more perſwaſive Motives and Arguments, than were ever before made known. Such as the unconceivable love of God in giving his onely begotten Son to take the humane nature, and to be an Expiatory Sacrifice for Loſt Sinners; his excellent Example here among us; his declarations of Free pardon to the vileſt of Sinners upon their Repentance, and Faith in his Go-

Part I. Goſpel. His proffers of grace to aſſiſt us in well-doing, and his readineſs to work in us by his Spirit an inward living principle of holineſs, if we will not reſiſt and quench it; his promiſes of the moſt tranſcendently-glorious reward in the life to come, to ſincere Believers, and threatnings of the moſt diſmal puniſhment to thoſe that ſhall perſiſt in impenitence and unbelief, *&c.*

Philal. You need ſay no more, than you have done, to make the *Chriſtian* a moſt incomparable *Religion*: but did you not ſay too much under the former Head, in affirming that therein is contained our whole duty, ſo as that we need do no more than read the Goſpel, to come to the knowledge of it? For there are very many Moral caſes, wherein men are forced to uſe their Reaſon to the utmoſt, and alſo to call in the aſſiſtance of other mens, for the underſtanding of their duty in them.

Theoph.

Theoph. Surely, *Philalethes*, you could not think me ſo extremely weak, as to mean by what I ſaid, that the Scriptures deſcend minutely to determine all poſſible caſes in particular; for this cannot be done in Books; they being infinite, and varying with mens *innumerable* circumſtances. But this was my meaning, that the particular duties men are *conſtantly* obliged to, are all *plainly* there reveled, and in the moſt expreſs terms: And I adde, that there are alſo general Rules laid down, whereby all emergent caſes may be determined, and ſuch as *ordinarily* occur, at leaſt, for the *moſt* part, with the greateſt eaſe. Part I.

But to go on: To ſay that there is nothing required but what is moſt ſutable to our Rational faculties, tends as much to magnifie Gods goodneſs to us, and to commend the Goſpel, as any thing that can be ſaid: And ſhould it conſiſt much, of perfectly

XXXIV. *To ſay that what the Goſpel requireth is moſt ſutable to Reaſon, is highly to commend it, &c.*

Part I. feɛtly new Precepts, which the world could never before ſo much as once have dreamt of, or of any thing like to them; and the reaſonableneſs of which could not be at all, or not without great difficulty apprehended, it would be exceedingly leſs eaſie to believe it to be a Religion ſent from God, than now it is. This alſo makes it a Religion as eaſie to be practiſed by Mankinde as can be: for all the Duties, wherein conſiſteth the ſubſtance of it, muſt have continued to oblige us, whether they were therein expreſſed or no. From what hath been ſaid, it is moſt manifeſt, that while we continue to be men, they cannot ceaſe to be our duty: and therefore whatſoever other precepts the Goſpel might have conſiſted of, they would have been an addition to our Burthen. And we may be hereby convinced that Gods deſigne in giving us the Goſpel is purely our own good, ſeeing the

the impoſitions, wherein (as I ſaid) conſiſts the ſubſtance of it, are but juſt ſo many as obedience to which is abſolutely neceſſary in *themſelvs* conſidered, much more then to the qualifying of us for the full enjoyment of himſelf in bleſſedneſs; and the reſt are enjoyned onely as helps to enable us to obey them. Part I.

XXXV. *Of their preaching the Reaſonableneſs of the points of meer belief.*

Philal. But do thoſe Preachers content themſelvs to ſhew that the *duties* of the Goſpel are very reaſonable? I have been informed, that they riſe higher in this attempt, and that ſometimes they undertake to demonſtrate that the points of meer *belief*, and even the moſt *myſterious* too, are ſo; and endeavour to level them with mens ſhallow Capacities.

Theoph. This, *Philalethes*, is partly true, and partly as falſe: It is in a ſenſe true, that they have proved ſometimes that all the points of meer belief are reaſonable; that is, con-

Part I.

XXXVI. *All the points of mere belief to be conſiſtent with Reaſon, ſomtimes proved by them.*

conſiſtent with Reaſon, ſo that we can have no temptation to diſ-believe any, upon the account of their contrariety to the innate and natural notions of our mindes. They (ſome of them at leaſt) endeavour to convince their Auditors, that our Saviour hath not impoſed upon our Faculties, in requiring our aſſent to Contradictions; that he puts not his *diſciples*, as his pretended Vicegerent doth his *proſelytes*, upon offering violence to their underſtandings, in any thing as a matter of Faith propoſed by him.

Philal. This is no more, in my opinion, than is neceſſary for men to know: For though our beſt Reaſon could never have proved to us divers Goſpel-truths, had they not been reveled; yet they being reveled, there is nothing, ſurely, in them, that rightly underſtood, ſounds ſo harſhly, but that our Reaſon may admit of it, and cloſe with it. But

do

do they not (as I ſaid I have heard) go about to bring down all ſuch points to mens capacities?

Part I.

XXXVII *That they do not endeavour to level all ſuch points with mens capacities.*

Theoph. That, be you aſſured, is a notorious Calumny; for they onely ſay, that the Doctrines of the Goſpel are all ſuch as we may be able to make *ſence* of; and that there is nothing in them that is *oppoſite* to our Reaſon. But they moſt freely acknowledge, that there are ſuch Myſteries, as are ſo ſublime as much to *exceed* our apprehenſions; and that can by no means be comprehended by the moſt rational perſons. And this acknowledgement, they have well proved, is no diſparagement to our Saviours Religion; but rather procures to it the greater veneration: there being no wiſe man but will willingly confeſs, that there are even in *Nature* innumerable things which he knows to be, but yet is not able to imagine how they are; and that his very *Senſes* do

XXXVIII *That they acknowledge incomprehenſible Myſteries in the Chriſtian Religion.*

aſſure

Part I. assure him of many such things as no faculty of his can give him a satisfactory account of.

Philal. I have often thought it to be very fit, that there should be some such Points in our Religion, as are not comprehensible and adæquate objects of our Understandings; that so, as we are to take occasion from the consideration of those Doctrines that God hath made facile, and adapted to our understandings, to admire his gracious condescention; so from the consideration of those, which we finde surpass our reach, we may no less adore his wisdom. But, *Theophilus*, do those Divines ever undertake to demonstrate the consistency of some Mysterious points with our Reason, as they are by the *Schoolmen*, and other over-*subtile Gentlemen* made out?

Theoph. No, I hope you think them wiser men than to adventure up-

upon a Task ſo deſperate. They conſider thoſe Points as they are delivered in the Scriptures; and not as dreſſed up with the Metaphyſical Subtilties of Wanton Wits: who have been ſo far from doing ſervice to thoſe Doctrines, that they have rendered them much more doubtful to many inquiſitive perſons, and ſuch as are not eaſily impoſed upon, by confident Sayings, and great Names.

Part I.

XXXIX. *That they prove the conſiſtency of ſuch points with reaſon, as they are delivered in Scripture onely.*

Philal. But now it comes to my minde, I am confident I have been told by ſome of their good Friends, that they aſſert more concerning the reaſonableneſs of the Speculative Doctrines of Chriſtianity, than that they are onely not *inconſiſtent* with Reaſon; but moreover, that they are very *ſuitable* to its dictates.

XL. *That they aſſert many ſpeculative points to be alſo ſuitable to the dictates of Reaſon.*

Theoph. I thank you for helping my Memory in *this*, as well as in many other particulars: your infor-

Part I.

XLI. *An Argument drawn from notions of the Heathens to prove the moſt weighty Points of Faith ſuitable to the dictates of Reaſon.*

mation is very true as to many of the weightieſt Points; and there is no wiſe man but will aſſert the ſame. For it is well known that the *Heathens* had a notion of them: *Life and immortality* are ſaid to be *brought to light by the Goſpel*, i. e. to give Mankinde full ſatisfaction in that Article of Faith, is the ſole prerogative of the Goſpel; our Saviour having given a ſenſible demonſtration of it, by his own Reſurrection and Aſcenſion; as well as in the plaineſt terms preached it. Now you need not be told that ſeveral of the Learned Heathens have by Arguments drawn from the nature of humane ſouls made that Doctrine highly probable; and that even the more Brutiſh ſort of them had *generally*, if not *univerſally* a ſenſe of a life to come. You know alſo that the Doctrine of a day of Judgment they were no ſtrangers to. *Juſtin Martyr truly* tells the Greeks in his Ora-

Oration to them, That *not onely the Prophets, and other Divine perſons of the Old Teſtament; but alſo thoſe that were accounted* wiſe *among the Heathens, both the Poets and Philoſophers, did acknowledge a judgement to come after death.* And their Poets tell us of three perſons whoſe Office it is to judge men in the other world; *viz. Minos, Rhadamanthus*, and *Æacus*. And mens being adjudged to rewards and puniſhments in the *other*, ſuitable to their actions in *this* world, was a Doctrine that accompanied that other, and as generally received: Nor are you ignorant what excellent Diſcourſes divers of the Philoſophers have of the nature of true happineſs. The forementioned *Juſtin* ſaith, That *it ſeemed probable to him, that* Plato *had entertained the doctrine of the Reſurrection of the body*: but I muſt leave him there, becauſe I finde that he gives Part I.

Part I. an inſufficient reaſon for that Conjecture.

Nay, even the Doctrine of the *Trinity* was, as to the ſubſtance of it, embraced by the *Pythagoræans* and *Platoniſts*.

Several other inſtances of this nature may be produced.

And there are other Particulars I might preſent you with, of notions the Heathens had, reſembling ſeveral other Doctrines reveled in the Goſpel, which are not leſs generally known than the forementioned. As they held a Doctrine ſomewhat like that of the divine Conception of our Saviour: for it was their opinion that divers of their eminent Benefactors were born of more than Humane race, and that they were *ex ſtirpe Deorum*; and accordingly gave Divine honour to them. Their ſacrificing of men for the attoning of their Gods, ſhewed that they believed what is ſomewhat of kin to the Do-

Doctrine of Satisfaction; or Christs reconciling us to God, by offering himself up as a Propitiatory Sacrifice. As *Grotius*, among others, hath fully shewn in his Book of *Satisfaction*. Part I.

They had another opinion that beareth resemblance to our Saviours Mediatorship; for they held the intercession of *Dæmons*; of which Mr. *Mede* hath discoursed in his *Apostacie of the later times*; and I finde that *Celsus* calls our Saviour the Christians *Dæmon*.

Philal. By these instances it should seem that the Heathens did of their own accords give credit to as strange Doctrines as any our Saviour requires our belief of; and that several of the *strangest* of them are so far from sounding like uncouth and absurd ones, that they are rather gratifications of the natural propensions of Mankinde.

Theoph. That the Learned Dr.

Part I. *More* hath well obſerved in his *Myſtery of Godlineſs*. Though, no queſtion, the Fathers did upon good grounds conclude that the Heathens received many Notions from the Jews, and ſome from a more ancient Tradition; and therefore we have no cauſe to judge that all the forementioned were the products of their own reaſoning, yet that makes not at all againſt the aſſertion that occaſioned theſe inſtances, but on the contrary clearly proves it. For I did not ſay that many of the weightieſt Points of meer belief may be certainly concluded from principles of Reaſon; or that, without the help of Revelation, men might have been acquainted with them; but that they are ſuitable to the Reaſon of mens Mindes, being reveled; and ſeveral of them very *taking* too; which appeareth by the Heathens being ſo tenacious of ſome, and ſo readily catching at

others

others upon the first news of them. Part I.

Philal. I give you my heartiest thanks, *Theophilus*, for the full satisfaction you have given me concerning those Friends of ours endeavours to perswade men of the Reasonableness of Christianity. Which doth much adde to my esteem of them; (though I know many are offended with them upon this account, and by way of *contempt* call them *The Rational Preachers*) for this Subject is most *necessary* to be handled in this our Age especially, wherein Atheism and Irreligion are, to the grief of all good men, gotten into the *Principles*, as well as *Practices* of very many. And I hope that I shall be better able for the future to vindicate them, than I have been, when I hear them reproached for bringing so much *Reason* into points of *Faith*. I must desire you now to proceed to inform me of other things that are, in their Preaching,

Part I. most worthy of observation.

XLII. *Of their Style in Preaching.*

Theoph. I think it not amiss, *Philalethes*, to let you understand in the next place, that they affect not Bumbaste words, trifling Strains of Wit, foolish Quibling, and making pretty sport with Letters and Syllables in their Preaching; but despise those doings as pedantick and unmanly. But on the contrary, they use a Style that is very *grave*, and no less *significant*.

Philal. This, undoubtedly, must needs be best *pleasing* to the more understanding part of our Congregations, and to *all* incomparably most *profitable*: As much as that pretty toying is cryed up by many, as a most rare Accomplishment; and conciliates to the most dextrous in that Knack, the repute of the Ablest Preachers; and makes them greatly plausible.

Theoph. But, certainly, it can do so among none, but very little-soul'd and

and childiſh people; and *ſuch* as whoſe judgement in Sermons, no *wiſe* man will make any account of. Part I.

I will adde alſo, that it is their endeavour to make the Doctrines of the Goſpel as eaſie and intelligible as well they may; wherein none have been more ſucceſsful. They are far from thoſe mens untoward *genius*, that delight to exerciſe their Wits, in finding out Myſtical and Cabaliſtical ſences in the plaineſt parts of Scripture, and in turning every thing almoſt into Allegories. XLIII. *Of their making Doctrines intelligible.* XLIV. *A ſort of men that are obſcurers of the Goſpel.*

Philal. I am greatly apt to fear, that thoſe men are far from being hearty friends of our Saviour, and his Religion; and that ſome, not daring openly to decry the Goſpel, take this courſe to undermine it, and to make a meer Trifle of it.

Theoph. They give us great cauſe for ſuch a ſuſpicion.

Obſerve moreover, that thoſe Prea-

Part I.

XLV. *Another ſort of ſuch.*

Preachers are no leſs averſe to their temper, who, moſt admiring that which they leaſt underſtand, and thinking there is very little in that, which is quickly intelligible; pleaſe themſelvs exceedingly with making Myſteries of the eaſieſt points of Faith; and ſuch Myſteries too, as they tell us, no man, though he be maſter of never ſo clear a Reaſon, can have an inſight into, without the ſpecial illumination of the Holy Ghoſt. That, becauſe the Apoſtle ſaith, *Great is the myſtery of godlineſs*, would make every thing *ſo* that the Goſpel hath reveled; and that ſo *high* as was now ſaid: whereas in thoſe words S. *Paul* means no more, than that divers Doctrines of the Goſpel, ſuch as he *there* enumerates, *viz. God manifeſted in the fleſh, juſtified in the ſpirit*, &c. are ſo high and admirable, that we cannot dive to the bottom of them, or fully comprehend them, nor could have

ſo

ſo much as once *thought* of them, had they not been from Heaven made known: but that being reveled they are ſtill to Reaſon unintelligible, and cannot be *ſufficiently underſtood* thereby; he hath aſſerted no ſuch thing. Now of *theſe*, as well as of the *former*, thoſe Preachers have, no leſs than any, diſcovered the great weakneſs and vanity; and when they have occaſion, make it plainly appear, that thoſe whoſe notions of divers Articles of Faith are ſo expreſſed, as that no man, that makes good uſe of his Reaſon, can tell what to make of them, deſerve nothing leſs than the Titles of *Spiritual Preachers*, and *profound Divines*, as they are by many accounted; and that they, in ſtead of being ſo, bewray very great ignorance of the Goſpel. Part I.

Philal. And, without queſtion, they do no ſmall miſchief, but render our Religion, which you have ſhewn

Part I.

ſhewn is ſo highly reaſonable, greatly ſuſpected by many of the warier ſort of people.

Theoph. I remember that *Eraſmus* complaineth of the times of the *Nicene Council*, that *it was then a matter of great Wit and Cunning to be a Chriſtian.* And a matter it was moſt worthy to be complained of: for evident it is, that our Saviour never made it ſo. He hath made Chriſtianity, ſo much, at leaſt, as is neceſſary to carry men to heaven, ſo plain, that an *honeſt* heart is a ſufficient prerequiſite to the underſtanding of it.

XLVI. *Of the perſpicuity of Scripture.*

Philal. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that he hath delivered all thoſe points that are abſolutely neceſſary to be rightly underſtood, in the plaineſt and moſt intelligible manner: and ſo condeſcended to the weakeſt capacities, that they cannot but apprehend his meaning in them, if it be not their own fault.

Theoph.

Theoph. I count that onely those Doctrines, that contain the terms of Mans Salvation, are of absolute neceſſity to be by all rightly underſtood; and that all ſuch are delivered with that perſpicuity and clearneſs, that nothing but mens ſhutting their eyes againſt the light can keep them from diſcerning their true meaning. Part I.

Philal. S. *Auſtin* hath a good ſaying to this purpoſe, in his Book *of Chriſtian Doctrine*, viz. *That all thoſe things that contain faith and manners of life, are found among thoſe Doctrines that are* plainly *laid down in Scripture.*

Theoph. This is ſo true, that *Celſus* is brought in by *Origen*, in his Sixth Book, finding great fault with the Scriptures upon the account of their plainneſs, and great ſimplicity: To whom he returneth this anſwer; *That Jeſus and his Apoſtles made uſe of ſuch a Style, as was beſt ſuited*

to

Part I. *to the vulgar ſort; and that* Plato *and other of* their *Philoſophers were greatly to blame, for expreſſing themſelvs in ſo lofty a manner as they did; for that, by this means, none could make uſe of them but* Learned *men.* And I remember that, in his ſeventh Book, he tells *Celſus*, that Plato *and the other wiſe Grecks were like to* Phyſicians *that took care of perſons of the better rank, but neglected ordinary Plebeians, and the meaner ſort; whereas the* Prophets, *and Diſciples of Jeſus, did no leſs carefully apply themſelvs to the good of* ſimple, *than of* wiſe *people.*

Philal. Surely Chriſt will never condemn men at the laſt day, for not believing thoſe things they could not by any means underſtand to be reveled: and it is matter of admiration to me, that any ſhould judge the Goſpel to be obſcure in matters neceſſary; when the Apoſtle ac-

accounted it ſo ſad a Judgement not to underſtand it: for, ſaith he, *If our Goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt.* Part I.

Theoph. And in the words following he ſaith, that *thoſe that underſtand it not, have their eyes blinded by the God of this world.* *Iſaiah*, propheſying of the Goſpel, and expreſſing it by the Metaphor of a way, ſaith that it is ſo *plain*, that *wayfaring men*, *though* fools, *ſhall not erre therein.* 'Tis true indeed, it is ſo deep a Sea, as S. *Hierome* ſaith, that *the* Elephant *may ſwim there*: there is that, and *much* of that too, that putteth the ſtrongeſt Brains, and moſt ſearching Wits, hard to it: but (as the ſame Father addes) 'tis ſo ſhallow a brook alſo, that is, as to all things *neceſſary* to ſalvation, that *the* Lamb *may wade in it.* So that all thoſe, *Philalethes*, that affect to make *ſuch* Truths as ſubtil and myſterious as they can,

do

Part I. do what lyeth in them to cross and make ineffectual the designe that our Saviour and his Apostles had in the delivery of them; and *these*, and all other Preachers that, like them, do condemn such doings, do no less advance it. And I will adde, that those that affect to make any points as obscure as they can, whether they are necessary or not, are too injurious to the Christian Religion.

XLVII. *Their opinion of powerful Preaching.*

And, by what hath been said, I am likewise put in minde to tell you, that these persons look upon no Preaching as truly *powerful*, but that which worketh upon the *affections* by first conquering the *judgement*; and convinceth men of their duty by solid Reasons and Arguments, and excites them thereunto by perswasive Motives: they esteeming that which affects people so, as they can give no account why it should, to be so far from *powerful*, that it doth not deserve to be called

Preach-

Part I.

Preaching. Now upon *theſe* accounts, as well as *thoſe* forementioned, do many inconſiderate people deſpiſe them, as men of dry Reaſon, and void of Gods Spirit: as if to be a *ſpiritual* Preacher, were to be an irrational one; and none were capable of divine illuminations, but ſuch as have bid adieu to the guidance of their intellectuals. Which is as much as to ſay, that we muſt ceaſe to be *Men*, and be metamorphos'd into Brutes, before we can hope to become Chriſtians.

XLVIII. *Of carnal and ſpiritual Reaſon.*

Philal. What confuſed and groſs thoughts have ſuch people in the matters of Religion! as not to be able to diſtinguiſh between that which is *truly carnal* (which they talk ſo much againſt) and *ſpiritual* Reaſon; and not to underſtand that the *former* is that onely which is governed by fleſhly and corrupt affections, and the *later* that which is ſubmitted *to*, and directed *by* our

Part I. Saviours Goſpel, and deſigneth nothing ſo much as promoting the ends of it.

XLIX. *A farther account of their Preaching.*

Theoph. There are a few things more, *Philalethes*, I would adverſe you of, concerning the Preaching of theſe our Friends; namely, that they are very careful ſo to handle the Doctrine of Juſtifying Faith, as not onely to make obedience to *follow* it, but likewiſe to include a hearty willingneſs to ſubmit to all Chriſts precepts in the *nature* of it. And to ſhew the falſity and defectiveneſs of ſome deſcriptions of Faith, that have had too general an entertainment, and ſtill have. This they look upon themſelvs as greatly obliged to do, as being well aware, of what dangerous conſequence ſome received notions of that grace are; and that not a few that have imbibed them, have ſo well underſtood their true and natural inferences, as to be thereby encouraged to let

let the Reins looſe to all Ungodli- Part I.
neſs.

They alſo ſo ſtate the Doctrine of *imputed*, as to ſhew the abſolute neceſſity of *inhærent* Righteouſneſs, and that in a more intelligible way, and leſs lyable to miſconſtruction, than hath ordinarily been heretofore done. As alſo the Doctrine of Gods grace, ſo as to reconcile it *with*, and ſhew the indiſpenſableneſs *of* mens endeavours: and (as the Apoſtle doth) they make Gods readineſs to work in us to *will*, by his *preventing* grace, and to *do*, by his *aſſiſting*, a *motive* to work out our own ſalvation. And I have heard ſeveral of them do this, in a more ſatisfactory and clear manner, than moſt, with whoſe Preaching I have been acquainted: wherein, as in the foregoing inſtances, they have done, in my opinion, very worthy ſervice. But ſome hot-headed men, from *thence* alſo, take occaſion great-

Part I. ly to vilifie them, & repreſent them as men Popiſhly affected, and holding Juſtification by *works* : as perſons utterly unacquainted with the great Myſtery of *believing* : as thoſe that make void the righteouſneſs of *Faith*, by eſtabliſhing *Moral* righteouſneſs : and that ſet themſelvs to cry up the power of *Nature*, and to perſwade their Hearers, that they are able to convert themſelvs, without being beholden to the *divine grace*. In all which, it is eaſie to ſhew that they have performed the parts of moſt notorious Calumniators ; and ſhewed themſelves, if not too malicious (which I would not think) yet extremely weak.

Philal. You ſay that they are accuſed as men that make void the righteouſneſs of Faith, by eſtabliſhing *Moral* righteouſneſs: I am thereby put in minde, that they have another Name given them beſides the Long one, and that of *Rational*

Pica-

Preachers; namely, *Moral Preachers*. Part I.

Theoph. Then have *you* heard them ſo called?

Philal. Yes, of late frequently.

Theoph. And do you think that an opprobrious name, *Philalethes?*

Philal. No, I aſſure you, not I; but I perceive *they* do that uſe it.

Theoph. I ever eſteemed *Morality* as that which no true Chriſtian can have a ſlight opinion of; and therefore thought it could never be judged a *Crime* to preach it.

L. *Of their being accuſed of preaching up onely a Moral righteouſneſs.*

Philal. But by *Moral Preachers* they mean ſuch as are meerly ſo.

Theoph. If by *Moral righteouſneſs* they underſtand a barely *external* conformity *to*, or *cuſtomary* obſervance *of* the laws of Righteouſneſs, they moſt ſhamefully belye theſe Divines, in ſaying that they preach no other Righteouſneſs: but if they mean thereby, the whole

LI. *In what ſence they do not ſo,*

Part I.

and in what ſence they do.

duty of man, to God, his Neighbour, and Himſelf; which *theſe* Preachers inſiſt upon, as much as *any* whatſoever, by the names of *true holineſs*, the *divine life of vertue*, the *righteouſneſs which is of God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus*; which he taught in his own perſon, and by his Apoſtles, and, upon our uſing the means, works in us by his Spirit; or *inward rectitude and integrity*; and *doing all the good we can from the beſt and moſt divine principles*; or, (as one of them expreſſeth it) *that divine and heavenly life whoſe* root *is faith in God and our Saviour Chriſt*; *and the branches or parts of it are humility, purity, and charity*: I ſay, if they upon the account of their preaching up ſuch a Righteouſneſs alone as *this*, call them in *contempt Moral* Preachers, they expoſe onely *themſelvs* to *contempt* by ſo doing.

Philal. Thoſe men will tell you, that

that *Evangelical* righteouſneſs is as well to be inſiſted on as *Moral*, nay and more than *Moral* too, by perſons that would be accounted Goſpel-Preachers. Part I.

LII. *No difference betwixt Evangelical righteouſneſs and that which is in the beſt ſence Moral.*

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I am ſo very dull, as not to be able to make any diſtinction between theſe two, as I have now deſcribed the later righteouſneſs; but think *Evangelical* to be ſuch a *Moral* righteouſneſs, and ſuch a *Moral Evangelical*.

Philal. But you know, that *they* make a difference between them.

Theoph. It is ſtrange they ſhould; underſtanding Moral righteouſneſs for that which conſiſteth in the Regulation of both the *outward* and *inward* man, according to the unchangeable Laws of righteouſneſs; (which I muſt confeſs may be properly called *Moral righteouſneſs*, and is ſo in the *moſt* proper ſence too) for I am as certain, as that the

Part I.

LIII. *To work in us such a Moral righteousness the design of the Gospel.*

Gospel is true, that its onely *ultimate* design upon us, is to work in us that Righteousness. Let any man but consider the *Precepts* of it, and he shall finde, I'll warrant him, that they are all designed (either mediately or immediately) to make men in that sence *morally righteous*. And I fear not to say, that I am verily perswaded, that if this were not the end of the Christian Religion, it would not be worthy of the Son of God. Let any one read our Saviours Sermon upon the Mount, and then tell me whether he doth not think, that if He were now upon the earth, these men would not call him a *Moral preacher*. He must have a strangely piercing eye of his own, that can therein discern any other, than *such* Moral discourses. What doth the Apostle S. *Paul* tell us, *the grace of God that brings salvation teacheth us*? is it not, *that denying ungodliness, and all worldly lusts,*

luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godlily? And if theſe Gentlemen ſuppoſe, that *living godlily* implieth ſomething that is not *ſo* Moral, (for I know they will not ſay ſo concerning *living ſoberly and righteouſly*) they will finde themſelvs very hard put to it to make it out. For all Godlineſs, our Saviour (as hath been ſaid) referreth to the *love* of God; and it would be ſtrange if *that* ſhould not be a Moral vertue. What did S. *Peter* mean, when (ſpeaking of our Saviour) he ſaith, that *his own ſelf bare our ſins in his own body, on the tree; that we, being dead to* ſin, *might live to* righteouſneſs? What *righteouſneſs* ſhould that be, which he doth there oppoſe to *ſin*, if not ſuch a one as is in the number of Morals? And yet the Apoſtle tells us, that our living to *this* was the deſigne of the death of Chriſt. *This* alſo is the end of the *promiſes*, as well as *precepts* Part I.

Part I. *cepts* of the Goſpel; as the ſame S. Peter aſſureth us. *He hath given us*, ſaith he, *exceeding great and precious promiſes*; for what end? is it that we ſhould be ſwollen with high conceits of Gods ſpecial love to us, and of our being the favourites and darlings of heaven? Nothing leſs: but it followeth, *that by theſe we might be partakers of the Divine nature, having eſcaped the corruption that is in the world through luſt.* And what do theſe men think it is to *eſcape the corruption of the world*, if not, to be truly *virtuous*, and, in the *beſt* ſence, *morally righteous*? Nay, what can they imagine it is to *partake of the divine*, or *a* divine *nature*, if not this? Can any thing be underſtood thereby, but participating of the divine *moral* perfections, ſuch as Juſtice, Mercy, Purity? I hope they will not ſay that an imitation of God in power, knowledge, and his other *Phyſical* per-

perfections is there intended. *This* St. *Paul* alſo (as much as thoſe people count him their *great* friend, and quote him more than any other Apoſtle) makes to be the deſigne of the Promiſes. *Having theſe promiſes* (ſaith he) *dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our ſelvs from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit*, (all ſenſuality, malice and pride) *perfecting holineſs in the fear of the Lord.* Nay, I may adde, that there is not a *Doctrine*, (as meerly Speculative as divers may ſeem to be at firſt ſight) but it hath a tendencie to the promoting of *this Moral* righteouſneſs: but that will be too long a task to perform now. And, indeed, I may ſpare my pains to do *this* at any other time; for it will not be long, before the world will ſee a Diſcourſe upon this Subject from a very worthy perſon, if God ſpare him life and health. But enough of this: I am aſhamed to adde more in ſo plain

Part I.

Part I.

plain a caſe; and think, indeed, that I have ſaid too much.

LIV. *A righteouſneſs in no ſence Moral a contradiction.*

Philal. What you have ſaid is as clear as the Sun at noon-day: and for my part I muſt confeſs, that I know no Righteouſneſs, that deſerves that name, but what is, in your ſence, truly *moral*. And a righteouſneſs in no ſence *ſo*, ſeems to my underſtanding a moſt perfect Contradiction. And therefore I much wonder what ſhould incline thoſe people to inveigh againſt preaching up altogether ſuch a righteouſneſs as this is. They muſt therefore mean, ſurely, ſomething elſe by it, than ſuch a one as you have deſcribed. Do they not (think you) mean, however they expreſs themſelvs, a *perfect unſinning* righteouſneſs; or the other extreme, a meer *partial* and *external* one?

Theoph. I had a thouſand times rather charge them with an errour of *Underſtanding* onely, than of *Will*;

Will; and therefore I ſhould be loath to think that they mean either of *thoſe*, becauſe I cannot then excuſe them from the guilt of notorious *lying*; for they have not the leaſt ſhadow of pretence for accuſing thoſe Preachers of at all preaching up the *former* righteouſneſs; which *they* as little doubt as *any*, that no man in this lapſed ſtate can attain to; and as to the *later*, none more frequently ſhew the defectiveneſs and inſufficiencie of it. But I perceive that *I* am acquainted with thoſe mens Principles better than *you* are; and therefore can, I preſume, tell you, why they are ſo angry with thoſe that underſtand the Goſpel better than themſelvs, for preaching up onely this *truly moral* or *real* righteouſneſs: namely, becauſe they hear no talks from their Pulpits of an *Imputative* righteouſneſs. Part I.

Philal. You ſtartle me now, *Theophilus*;

Part I.

philus ; I pray do thoſe Preachers deny Imputed righteouſneſs ? I thought them as Orthodox in that, as in any other point.

LV. *Of imputative righteouſneſs ; and in what ſence they believe and preach it.*

Theoph. They don't uſe the *phraſe*, at leaſt not often ; and anon I will tell you why ; but they *believe* the *thing*, and *preach* it too, in that ſence, that I dare ſay *you* do.

Philal. In what ſence ?

Theoph. Do you not remember, that I told you a while ſince, that *they* ſo *handle the doctrine of* imputed, *as to ſhew the neceſſity of* inhærent *righteouſneſs* ?

Philal. Yes very well.

LVI. *Their notion of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs.*

Theoph. This, then, is their notion of Chriſts Imputed righteouſneſs : That thoſe which are *ſincerely* righteous, and from an *inward living* principle allow themſelvs in no *known ſin*, nor in the neglect of any *known duty*, which is to be truly *Evangelically* righteous, ſhall be dealt with and rewarded, in and through

through Christ, as if they were perfectly, and in a strict *Legal* sence so. Part I.

Philal. I my self would have given no other account of Imputed righteousnes.

Theoph. You see, I had a good guess of you: for I presumed that such a man, as I take *you* to be, could entertain no other notion of it; for I am confident that this is the onely true one.

Philal. But are there any that will not be satisfied with this account? I must confess, it is so long since that I read any thing of the Quarrelsom mens Divinity, that I have forgotten both in *this*, and some *other* particulars, what they say.

Theoph. But have you not had occasion of late to discourse with any of them?

Philal. No, not about matters of Religion.

Theoph. If you had, I believe you

Part I. you would not have asked me, whether there are any, that have any other notion of imputed righteouſneſs, than that which you now heard.

Philal. Inform me, I pray, what is their opinion of it.

Theoph. That *I* will do *truly*; and it is this: That Chriſts righteouſneſs or inherent holineſs is as completely made *theirs*, as if they themſelves were *completely* and *perfectly* righteous: and that upon no other condition or qualification wrought in them, but onely *believing*; whereby too many of them mean ſtrongly *fancying* this righteouſneſs to be *theirs*.

LVII. *A falſe notion of it.*

Philal. *I* do now remember that *I* have read ſuch doctrine as this in my younger days: but *I* need no argument to convince me that it is groſly falſe. For there are theſe two *palpable* miſtakes in it.

First,

Part I.

First, That *Christs* righteouſneſs is properly made *ours*. I am confident, that there is no *Scripture* that tells us ſo. All that we finde aſſerted in the Goſpel, as to this matter, is this; That *real* benefits and advantages, which are likewiſe exceedingly *great* & *excellent*, do by the righteouſneſs of Chriſt accrue to us; and thoſe no *leſs* great and excellent, than if that righteouſneſs were in the moſt *proper* ſence ours.

LVIII. *The firſt Miſtake in that notion.*

Secondly, The other Miſtake is, that this righteouſneſs is made ours, upon no other terms, than that of *believing* it is ſo. This is not onely a *falſe*, but alſo a moſt *dangerous* opinion.

LIX. *The ſecond Miſtake.*

Theoph. You have not, I ſuppoſe, forgotten that I informed you that thoſe they call the *Moral Preachers* are careful to ſhew the falſity and defectiveneſs of ſome Definitions of Faith, of dangerous conſequence; and this is one of the *falſe* ones; namely, that *It is a taking hold of*

Part I.

LX. *A falſe definition of faith they confute in their Preaching.*

Chriſts righteouſneſs; or *a believing that it is made over to us*. Which is the ſame, as I ſaid, with *Strongly fancying it to be ours*.

Philal. You ſaid that they are deſpiſed, as men unacquainted with the great Myſtery of *believing*; this is a *myſterious* Faith indeed.

Theoph. It is ſo; for I count nothing ſo myſterious, and hard to be underſtood, as the thing called *Nonſence*; which I am ſure this Definition is, according to *their ſence* of it, that will not admit of any other, but one worded after that manner: for they underſtand Chriſts righteouſneſs, in the moſt *proper* ſence, and not for the advantages redounding to believers by it. I ſpeak of thoſe that are truly *Antinomians*.

Phil. But why do not thoſe friends of ours uſe at all, or but ſeldom, the phraſe *Imputed righteouſneſs*?

Theoph. What need they, ſo long as they preach the Doctrine? I mean,

mean, all that is true of it. But to ſay the truth, thoſe mens very untoward notion, hath ſo leavened the heads of the Vulgar, that they can ſcarcely hear of Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs, but they are ready to make an ill uſe of it, by taking from thence an occaſion to entertain low and diſparaging thoughts of an inward real righteouſneſs. I have too good reaſon to ſuſpect this. So that, to deal freely with you, I think it would be well if it were never uſed, except when there is an opportunity of alſo explaining it.

Philal. What you ſay is conſiderable; but is it not a Scripture-phraſe? And I have heard you ſay, that you could wiſh that points of Faith were uſed to be expreſſed, as they are in Scripture.

Theoph. It would ordinarily be to very good purpoſe if they were; and therefore theſe Divines preaching the Doctrine of Remiſſion of

Part I. sins through the bloud of Christ, do preach all that is true of the Doctrine of Christs imputed righteousnes, in *Scripture*-language. For, as a Learned Divine saith, *If you prescind it from remission of sins through the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, this phrase of Imputative righteousnes hath no signification at all; and that therefore there is no damage done to our Religion, if it be not accounted a distinct Article from the remission of sins in the bloud of Christ. For it cannot afford any true and useful sence distinct therefrom; nay I may say, any that is not very mischievous and dangerous, and such as tends to that loathsome and pestilential errour of Antinomianism.* Thus far he. But take notice moreover, that this expression, *Christs imputed righteousnes*, or *the imputation of Christs righteousnes*, is not to be found in all the Bible. Nor in any of the places where we finde

Preface to *The mystery of Godliness*, p. 27.

finde the word *imputed* relating to *righteouſneſs*, is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt at all to be underſtood; but onely an effectual Faith which is the very ſame with inherent righteouſneſs, which, as I ſaid, is *that Moral* righteouſneſs onely, that thoſe Preachers may be juſtly charged with altogether inſiſting upon. Part I.

LXI. *Chriſts imputed righteouſneſs no Scripture-phraſe.*

Phil. I wiſh we had time, before we go farther, to conſider thoſe places.

Theoph. There are but two Chapters in all the New Teſtament, where we finde the word *imputed* mentioned as relating to *righteouſneſs*. One is the Fourth to the *Romans*, and the other the Second of S. *James*. In the Fourth to the *Romans* we have it four or five times; and it is moſt evident, that there ſtill it is to be interpreted as I ſaid. For the Apoſtles deſigne in that Chapter is to prove againſt the Jews, that the obſervance of the *Moſaical* Rites, whereof Circumciſion

LXII. *Some verſes in the fourth to the* Romans *conſidered.*

Part I. was the chief, is not neceſſary to mens juſtification or acceptance with God; and this he proves by the inſtance of *Abraham*, who was accepted, and alſo very *high* in the divine favour, even while he was in Uncircumciſion. Now in ſeveral verſes, his Faith (which we know was not *idle*, but very *operative*) is ſaid to be *imputed unto him for righteouſneſs* in his uncircumciſed eſtate; *i. e.* it was of the ſame account with God, ἐλογίσθη, it was *reckoned*, (as in two verſes it is there tranſlated) or it was *valued* by God, at as high a rate, as if it were complete righteouſneſs. And in like manner the Apoſtle aſſureth the *Romans* two or three ſeveral times, that all that *believe* in Chriſt, (whereby we are to underſtand ſuch a Faith as *Abrahams* was) *their* Faith ſhall alſo be imputed for righteouſneſs to *them*, (without the addition of the *works of the Law*) as *his* was to *him*.

And

Part I.

LXIII. *S.* James 2. 23. *considered.*

And then we have the phraſe again, *James* 2. 23. But *there* is onely a repetition of the ſame that S. *Paul* had ſaid concerning *Abraham*, *viz.* that *he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs*; which is a quotation out of *Geneſis* 15. 6. Now this place of S. *James* will farther explicate that of S. *Paul*. S. *James* ſaith, verſ. 21. that *Abraham was juſtified by works*, that is, (as appears by the next verſe) an obediential *Faith*, or Faith expreſſing and exerting it ſelf by good works. And then it followeth, *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſs.* Nothing can be plainer, than that this is the Apoſtle's meaning: This working faith of *Abraham*, was accounted or accepted by God for righteouſneſs. For as it was the deſigne of S. *Paul*, in the foremention-ed Chapter, to prove againſt the Jews, or Judaizing Chriſtians, that

Part I. Justification was to be had without the meer external works of the *Mosaical* dispensation; and that these could have no influence into it: so is it S. *James's*, in this Chapter, to prove, it is like against the *Gnosticks*, who were *Ranting Antinomians*, the absolute necessity of new obedience, in order to mens being received into Gods favour; and that justifying faith must be productive of good works. Now as S. *Paul* proved what he designed, by shewing that *Abraham* was justified by *faith* without the *works* of the Law; so S. *James* proveth his designe by shewing, that the faith *Abraham* was justified by was such as discovered it self by obedience to Gods commands; and instanceth in the highest act of obedience too, *viz.* his offering *Isaac* upon the Altar.

Philal. All this is as clear as can be. But, *Theophilus*, is that place of

of S. *Paul*, *Philippians* 3. 9. to be underſtood of *inherent* righteouſneſs? where he ſaith, that he chiefly deſires to *be found in Chriſt*, *not having his own righteouſneſs which is of the Law*, *but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith.*

Part I.

LXIV. Philippians 3. 9. *conſidered.*

Theoph. There can be no other there intended by this later righteouſneſs. For we learn by the preceding verſes, that by *his* own *righteouſneſs which is of the Law*, he meant that which conſiſted in the obſervance of the Jewiſh Law; which he calleth his *own*, as being that which before his converſion he gloried in, or rather, as being that which he could obtain by his own natural power, it conſiſting of meerly *external* performances. And it is as evident by the verſe following, that by *the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith*, which he oppoſeth to his *own*, and that *which is of the Law*,

Part I.

Law, he means the righteousness of the new creature, wrought in him by Gods holy Spirit; and is an effect or fruit of believing Christs Gospel: For see how he goes on: *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. i. e.* That I may experimentally know *him*, and the power of his *resurrection*, in raising me up to newness of life; and of his *death*, in killing and mortifying all my corrupt affections.

Well, *Philalethes*, considering what hath been said, is it not matter of wonder, that any but arrant Hypocrites should desire to have more told them, than that God is so pleased with the Active and Passive obedience of his Son Jesus, as that for his sake he will reward those, that accept of him for their Lord and Saviour, though they are very weak and imperfect, as if they were altogether

gether ſpotleſs and ſinleſs perſons? And is it not every jot as high a favour, and as great an expreſſion of the Divine grace, to be dealt with as if we were perfectly righteous, as to be ſo judged and eſteemed? Part I.

LXV. *As high a favour to be dealt with as if we were perfectly righteous as to be ſo eſteemed.*

Philal. I ſhould think him as blinde as a Beetle that doth not ſee it is. But though I ſaid, the *Antinomian* notion of imputed righteouſneſs is of dangerous conſequence; yet now I remember me, the defenders thereof have a way to evade it; for they ſay, that *though a real inward righteouſneſs is no qualification required to this imputation of Chriſts righteouſneſs, and ſo to our* juſtification; *yet it will follow of it ſelf, by way of gratitude, and therefore will be found in men, before their* Salvation.

Theoph. I will anſwer you to this, in the words of an excellent Doctor: *This is like to prove but a ſlippery hold, when it is believed that*

Dr. *Cudworth* in his Serm. preached at *Lincolns* Inne.

Part I. *that gratitude it ſelf, as well as all other graces, is in them already by imputation.* What Reply they can make hereunto, I am not able to imagine.

Philal. I am not like to help you. To ſay the truth, it is a moſt ſottiſh and miſchievous Doctrine; and muſt needs do a world of hurt among people that are glad of any pretence for their carnality and diſobedience.

Theoph. I know too many that make uſe of it to patronize their ungodly practices; and no queſtion, it is the grand ſupport of *moſt*, if not of *all* hypocrites. A very worthy perſon, preaching ſome time ſince, upon the words of *Zacheus*, the neceſſity of Reſtitution, where there is ability, in caſe of fraud; one of his Auditors was heard to ſay, as he was going out of the Church, *If the Doctrine now taught us be true, how are we beholden to Jeſus Chriſt?*

And

And multitudes, I fear, of our meerly imputatively-righteous men *think* what that Gentleman had the face to ſpeak. Part I.

Philal. You may well fear it; for there is no conſequence more natural from *any* Doctrine, than is *this* from *thoſe* mens, *viz. That real righteouſneſs, or inherent holineſs, is a needleſs thing in order to eternal happineſs.*

LXVI. *The dangerous conſequence of the Antinomian doctrine about imputed righteouſneſs.*

Theoph. The light at noon-day is not clearer, than is that inference: for if a perſon may have in his unregenerate or ſinful ſtate Chriſts righteouſneſs made his, and ſo be eſteemed by God as perfectly righteous; what ſhould hinder but that in the ſame ſtate, he may be admitted to enjoy the *reward* of a righteous man? If an ungodly man may be *juſtified*, and declared righteous, why may he not alſo be *ſaved* and made happie?

Philal. But they will tell you, that

Part I. that it is expresly asserted by S. *Paul*, *That God justifieth the ungodly.*

Rom. 4. 5.

Theoph. I cannot conceive why it may not be admitted, that the word that signifieth *to justifie*, is in divers places to be understood for making *really just*, or *sanctifying*: for because it is sometimes to be taken in a forensick sence, it doth not therefore follow that it must always be so. But I will willingly grant, that it is to be so understood here, if that by *the ungodly* may be meant those that were once so; that is, *before*, not at the *same time* when they were justified. For to say that God can pronounce a person just & righteous, that is unjust and unrighteous, is the greatest contradiction imaginable to his *own* justice, his *own* righteousness. This makes him to pronounce a perfectly false sentence, and to do that which *Prov.* 17. 5. he himself had declared *an abomination*. Nor can we entertain

tain a more unworthy thought of the Holy God, than to conceive, that he hath no greater antipathy againſt *ſin*, than to make *him*, that alloweth and liveth in it, an object of his *complacential* love. Part I.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, to ſay the truth, I have obſerved that thoſe men make ſuch a thing of *ſin*, as that it may become God well enough to reconcile himſelf thereunto, as well as to him that lives in it. For they make it a meer indifferent thing in it ſelf, and to depend onely upon arbitrary laws, the evil of which is founded upon the alone *will* of God; as you gave me an intimation at our entrance on this Diſcourſe. Which account of ſin doth plainly, as you ſaid, undermine all Religion; and therefore the *Antinomian* opinion of *imputed righteouſneſs*, as abſurd, and of as wretched conſequence as it is, may, if that be ſo, very well be true.

LXVII. *The Antinomians opinion of ſin.*

Theoph.

Theoph. It may with as great ſhew of reaſon be queſtioned whether *God* be eſſentially *good*, as whether *ſin* be intrinſecally *evil* : And I admire, what thoſe men have done to themſelvs to enable them once to doubt the later, more than the former.

Philal. I hope they will call it *Blaſphemy* to deny Gods eſſential goodneſs ; yet in acknowledging no vertue or vice independent upon all *will*, they dwindle it away to a perfect nothing.

Theoph. I have not a more undoubted aſſurance of mine own being, than of the truth of what you ſay. Well, *Philalethes*, thoſe whoſe ſtomacks can digeſt ſuch filthy ſtuff, (and ſuch as I can ſhew you even *Heathens* did nauſeate) need not ſtick at ſwallowing the Phancie of imputed righteouſneſs in that groſs ſence, as abſurd and dangerous as it is : but *we* that know how contrary

ſin

ſin is to the *Nature*, as well as the *Will* of God, cannot queſtion, that no man that is in love with it can, by vertue of anothers Righteouſneſs, be eſteemed or dealt with by God as righteous. Part I.

Philal. When I can once ſee a diſeaſed or lame man made well and ſound, by anothers imputed health and ſoundneſs, I may imagine a wicked man made righteous, by the imputation of anothers righteouſneſs; but before I cannot; as well knowing that wickedneſs is as really a *moral*, as ſickneſs or lameneſs is a *natural* evil.

Theoph. If you don't fancie it till then, to be ſure you never will.

Philal. They are both alike contradictions. But, I pray, *Theophilus*, now I think on't, how can thoſe that hug, and are ſo fond of this ill-favoured notion, have any opinion of Chriſts Expiatory Sacrifice for the forgiveneſs of ſins; for how can

Part I. there be any ſin to be pardoned, where a perfect and moſt complete righteouſneſs is imputed?

Theoph. That queſtion is put by the laſt mentioned Doctor; but I believe he will wait long enough for a ſatisfactory anſwer to it.

Philal. Is it poſſible, think you, that there ſhould be any *good* men of this Perſwaſion?

LXVIII. Theophilus *his charity for ſome Antinomians.*

Theoph. As apt as I am to cenſure and condemn ſome *doctrines*, I would be as backward to paſs ſentence on the perſons of thoſe that hold them. And I muſt tell you, I verily hope that there are pious men of that opinion we are now perſtringing; but know too, that thoſe of them that are ſo, are ſo weak as not to underſtand the true conſequences of their Doctrine; and ſo honeſt, as, at firſt hearing, to abhor them: And were led to like well of it, not out of a deſigne to gratifie any baſe luſt; but becauſe it ſeemed

to

to them, to have a ſhew of humility and ſelf-denial, and to advance Gods grace. Part I.

Philal. As charitable as you are towards them, I fear that they (if not thoſe alſo that are too neer of kin to them) had they heard your paſt diſcourſe, would pronounce you an Heretick.

Theoph. And what if they ſhould? I ſhould pitie them as weak, but not condemn them as wicked for ſo doing. The excellent *Melanchthon* was called a worſe name by *Luther*; and the worſt hurt I wiſh them is, that I could upon as good grounds return that anſwer to *them*, that he did to *him*: which was to this effect; *Though Luther calls me Devil, yet I will call Luther a moſt pious ſervant of Jeſus Chriſt.* Beſides, we need not now-a-days look upon our ſelvs as having any great injury done to us by being called *Hereticks*; that name being grown (as you know

Part I. who ſpeaks) a meer *Theological Scare-crow*: and moreover, there is no man but is ſo *reputed*, if not ſo *called*, by ſome or other. But yet, miſtake me not ſo, as if I thought that to be really a Heretick, and in a Scripture-ſence, were a trivial and light matter: for I am far from ſo thinking; being well aware, that the Apoſtle reckons *Hereſies* with *Adulteries*, *Laſciviouſneſs*, *Idolatry*, *Witchcrafts*, *Hatred*, *Seditions*, and other *fruits of the fleſh*, which will undoubtedly exclude men out of Gods kingdom.

LXIX. *A defective definition of Faith, that thoſe Divines preach againſt, and the ill conſequence of it.*

Philal. You intimated that there is more than one definition of Juſtifying Faith, which thoſe they call the *Moral Preachers* concern themſelvs to bring their Hearers out of conceit with.

Theoph. There is another, that they judge as *defective*, as that we have given our ſence of is *falſe*; which is this: That *it is a recumbence*

hence or reſting on Chriſt for ſalva- Part I.
tion. There are thoſe which I cannot but think are very good men, that will by no means endure that any more ſhould be admitted into its definition. Now theſe men, I acknowledge, make inherent holineſs otherwiſe neceſſary, than as that which muſt needs follow, by way of gratitude, upon a ſenſe of their being in a juſtified ſtate: for they make it, a neceſſary qualification to *Salvation*, though not to *Juſtification.* But herein *they* alſo fall into the *Antinomian* Errour; that they, or at leaſt their doctrine ſuppoſeth a man capable of Gods favour ſo far as to have his ſins pardoned, before he is purged from them, I mean freed from their reigning power.

Philal. Theſe differ from the other men, as I ſuppoſe, in *this* alſo, That they do not make Juſtification to be from Eternity, as *they* do.

Theoph. You ſay well; they do not approve of that mad Phancie, but make Juſtification to follow upon Believing: but then, that Believing they judge neceſſary to Juſtification, they make ſuch a ſcanty thing as I now ſaid; and will not hear of making receiving Chriſt as Lord, or being willing to obey his precepts, a prerequiſite to the obtaining of that priviledge. And ſo their doctrine is too plainly liable to the ill conſequences of the other mens.

Philal. Do they not onely ſay, that good *works* are not neceſſary to Juſtification?

Theoph. No, that I am ſure they do not: for, as I told you, they will not admit ſo much as a *willingneſs* to perform them into the definition of Juſtifying faith: And beſides, they aſſert that good works are not always neceſſary to *Salvation* it ſelf neither; as when a perſon is converted

at

at the point of death. Wherein they say truly, if any are; which can be known to none but God onely. But then observe moreover, that these persons will not have their Faith a *condition* of Justification, but an *instrument*. Part I.

Philal. But why are they so shie of that phrase, and so fond of this?

Theoph. Their pretence is, that to make any condition of Justification, is to derogate from the freeness of Gods grace therein. But to that we shall have occasion to speak anon.

Philal. Our Salvation, as well as Justification, is ascribed to Gods grace; but sure they will grant that *that* hath conditions?

Theoph. Conditions must take from the freeness of the one, as well as of the other; but therefore, they being aware of it, will not call what is necessary to Salvation *proper conditions*, but rather qualifications;

Part I. men having, they ſay, no hand in them, but are the meer effects of the Holy Ghoſt.

Philal. Will they not grant then, that the Covenant of Grace is conditional? if it be not, it is, ſure enough, no Covenant: for I underſtand not what a Covenant means, and how it is diſtinguiſhable from a *meer* or abſolute promiſe, if it be not conditional.

Theoph. No more can any mortal. Therefore they talk ſtrangely in the clouds as to this matter; ſo that I confeſs, I can by no means underſtand them; I wiſh they underſtand themſelvs. For becauſe there are ſo many promiſes in the Goſpel that run as conditionally as words can expreſs them, they are ſhie of saying, with the *Antinomians*, that *the Covenant of Grace is not conditional*; but then they tell us that all the priviledges therein contained ſhall be abſolutely beſtowed on thoſe that they

they are promiſed to; and ſo, in my weak judgement, they plainly deny all conditionality therein notwithſtanding. And they think themſelvs warranted thus to expreſs themſelvs, by *Jeremiah* 31.33. and the quotation of that place, *Hebrews* 8. 10. But to theſe places we will ſpeak anon. Part I.

Philal. Well, I perceive, *theſe* alſo are *obſcurers* of *plain*, and I had almoſt ſaid too, *ſpoilers* of *good* Divinity, as well as the other men: for the conſequences of their Doctrine, will, I fear, be found to have too untoward an influence upon the practice of too many that underſtand them; though they do not ſhew themſelvs quite ſo ſoon, as thoſe that follow from the former Doctrine.

Theoph. I wiſh they could as eaſily diſcern Conſequences, as I ſee you do: for my charity leads me to believe that very many of them have

Part I.

have so much unkindness for them, as that they would then for their sakes bid adieu to the beloved premisses. But, *Philalethes*, there are other more moderate and wise persons, and many of them men of excellent worth, who being sensible how greatly Protestants have exposed themselvs to the Papists lash, by that doctrine make *receiving of Christ as both Lord and Saviour to be justifying Faith.* (Which I acknowledge to be a very true and full definition.) But yet they say, that though this alone is the Faith that justifieth, yet as it justifieth, it receives Christ as *Saviour* onely; or consists in relying on his merits.

LXX. *A full definition of Faith ill applied to the business of justifying.*

Philal. But is not this marvellous subtile?

Theoph. Truly it seems so to *me*; and I believe, at least, to all *vulgar* capacities.

Philal. But why will they not admit, that receiving Christ *quà Lord*,

Lord, as well as *quâ Saviour*, juſtifieth ? Part I.

Theoph. Becauſe they ſay Juſtification is often denied to *works*, and onely aſcribed to *faith*. But they apprehend not a difference between theſe two, otherwiſe than by making *faith*, relying on Chriſts merits; and *works*, yeelding obedience to his precepts. But, therefore, that they may reconcile Juſtification by Faith alone, with taking obedience (or a willingneſs to obey) into juſtifying Faith, (which they are convinc'd they muſt do, or they ſhall make mad work on't) that is, that they may make S. *James* not to contradict S. *Paul*, they ſay that juſtifying Faith muſt be a working obediential Faith; yet *as* it juſtifieth muſt be conſidered as diſtinct from obedience. But becauſe it is replied, that to rely upon Chriſts merits, is an act of obedience, or a *work*; they anſwer, that though it be, yet

it

Part I. it doth not juſtifie *as* it is a work; and therefore with the other men, they will not have it called a *condition* of Juſtification, but the *inſtrument*.

Philal. But don't you think that this elaborate acuteneſs might be well ſpared, by underſtanding works when they are undervalued comparatively to grace and faith, as quite diſtinct things from ſincere obedience to the Goſpel of Chriſt?

Theoph. I am verily perſwaded it may; and that the way, in which thoſe that are called the *Moral Preachers* go, as to this point, will be made as clear as our hearts can wiſh, by ſo underſtanding them.

Philal. I deſire you to give me as full an account, as briefly you can, how they deliver this doctrine of Faith, in reference to Juſtification.

Theoph. Juſtifying Faith (becauſe they would expreſs themſelvs as plainly as may be, in a matter of moſt

Part I.

moſt weighty importance) they deſcribe much after this manner: That *It is ſo full a perſwaſion, that Chriſt Jeſus is the Saviour of Mankinde, and that his Goſpel is true, as cauſeth a hearty and ſincere willingneſs to yeild obedience to all his precepts; or to take that courſe, which he hath preſcribed in order to Salvation.*

LXXI. *A full and plain definition of Faith uſed by thoſe Preachers.*

Philal. This is plain enough: And I ſhould think, not capable of being miſunderſtood.

Theoph. Though I cannot ſay that I ſpeak the words of any of them; yet ſure I am, that *thoſe* I have heard them uſe, in defining juſtifying faith, are as eaſily intelligible as *theſe* are, and have the ſame ſence.

Philal. I have heard you heretofore ſay, that when you were a youth, you was taught this definition, *viz. Juſtifying faith is a grace of the holy Spirit, whereby a man, being convinced of his ſin, and miſerable*

Part I. *ſerable eſtate in regard of it, and an all-ſufficiencie in Chriſt to ſave from both, receives him as he is tendered in the Goſpel, or according to his three Offices of Prophet, Prieſt, and King.* What fault can be found with the wording of this?

Theoph. None at all; nor is a better definition of Faith deſirable: I was taught *this*, when other kinde of definitions of that grace were all the Mode, by a moſt *judicious*, as well as *pious* Divine: (I cannot forbear to call him ſo, though he is of all men moſt nearly related to me) & to *him* I ſhall ever acknowledge my ſelf obliged, for firſt rightly inſtructing me in this point, and antidoting me againſt the forementioned falſe notions concerning it, with divers others that were highly by very many cryed up in *thoſe*, as well as in *theſe* wilde days.

Philal. You are not leſs beholden to that Reverend and worthy perſon;

ſon, upon thoſe accounts, than you are for your very *being*. But, I pray, do the Preachers you have undertaken to repreſent, not onely ſay that Juſtifying faith includes obedience, but alſo, that it juſtifieth *as* it doth ſo?

LXXII. *Of that Doctrine of theſe Preachers, that Faith juſtifieth as it impliſeth obedience.*

Theoph. Yes, *Philalethes*, that they do. For they do not think that the Scriptures make any difference between the two forementioned acts of faith, as to the influence it hath upon Juſtification; and that not without cauſe. S. *Paul* tells us, *Gal.*5.6. that *neither circumciſion nor uncircumciſion availeth any thing*; (he means eſpecially as to Juſtification, as appears by verſ 4) *but faith that worketh by love*; which takes in the whole of obedience; and there he ſtops. The Apoſtle troubleth not himſelf to give any caution to the *Galatians*, that they ſhould not underſtand him as if his meaning was any more than this,

That

Part I. *That juſtifying faith worketh by love*; or as if he had ſaid, *That faith juſtifieth* as *it worketh by love.*

LXXIII. *An argument to prove that Faith juſtifieth as it receivs Chriſt* quâ *Lord, as well as* quâ *Saviour.*

Philal. There comes into my minde an Argument, that ſeems to me demonſtrative, that there is to be made no diſtinction between thoſe acts of faith in juſtifying: namely, the Scriptures aſſure us, that our Saviours death was intended not onely to deliver us from *wrath*, but from *ſin* too; and it is plain that this later was its *immediate* end; deliverance from wrath being a conſequent of deliverance from ſin: And therefore faith in Chriſts bloud muſt needs juſtifie as it deſigns obtaining *this*, as well as *that*.

Theoph. Your Argument will rather prove more than that for which you bring it, *viz.* That if thoſe acts of faith be at all to be diſtinguiſhed in the buſineſs of Juſtification, the greater ſtreſs is to be laid on that, which complieth with the principal end

end of our Saviours death. And ſo, if we muſt be making compariſons, Faith juſtifieth as it receives Chriſt *quâ* Lord, rather than *quâ* Prieſt or Saviour. But however, I am not for any compariſons, they being perfectly needleſs, and nothing gotten by them. Part I.

Philal. That act of receiving Chriſt as Lord, is to go before that of receiving him as Prieſt: for we *may* not rely upon him for ſalvation, till we are willing to yeeld obedience to him. LXXIV. *The act of receiving Chriſt quâ Lord, to go before that of receiving him quâ Prieſt.*

Theoph. 'Tis moſt true; we have not any ground at all ſo to do: we muſt be willing to be to our power univerſally obedient, before we take that confidence.

Philal. Before you go farther, I pray tell me what diſtinction you would make betwixt Faith and Repentance, and the other graces alſo, if its nature be extended ſo far as to imply obedience.

Part I.

LXXV. *How faith is diſtinguiſht from repentance and other vertues, in the buſineſs of Juſtification.*

Theoph. The Scriptures are ſeldom ſo curious, when they ſpeak of Faith, or Repentance, or the love, or fear, or knowledge of God, *&c.* as to underſtand them in ſo reſtrained a ſence, as to abſtract them from other vertues: but ſometimes they expreſs all by one. We finde in multitudes of places ſome one of the principal vertues put to expreſs the whole of practical Religion; as each of thoſe laſt mentioned; of which I need not give you inſtances. And whereas Faith and Repentance are ſometimes diſtinguiſhed, it is onely becauſe believing the Goſpel implieth more than bare Repentance in its ſtrict notion. *Irenæus* therefore gives this honeſt deſcription of faith in Chriſt: *Credere ei eſt facere ejus voluntatem*: To believe in Chriſt is to do his will. Moreover, we ſhall finde that Juſtification, and Remiſſion of ſins, (for the Scripture makes no difference betwixt

twixt thoſe two) is ſometimes aſcribed to other vertues, as well as to Faith: but then they are underſtood either in ſo general a ſence, as to include Faith, or as ſuppoſing it. For inſtance, *Acts* 3. 19. 'tis attributed to converſion and repentance: *Repent and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out.* To forgiveneſs of treſpaſſes, *Matth.* 6. 14. *If you forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will alſo forgive you.* To ſhewing mercy, *Mat.* 5. 7. *Bleſſed are the merciful, for they ſhall obtain mercy.* To works, or ſincere obedience, *James* 2. 24. *A man is juſtified by* works, *and not by* faith *onely.* Where Faith is taken in a more ſtrict ſence, and Works ſuppoſe Faith. That is, A man is juſtified by an effectual working faith, and not by faith without works. And again, verſ. 21. ſaith he, *Was not our father Abraham juſtified by works?* who yet, according to S. Part I.

Part I.

Paul, was justified by faith. But whereas Justification is mostly attributed to *faith*, the reason is, because all other graces are vertually therein contained; and that is the Principle from whence they are derived.

LXXVI. *Why justification is mostly ascribed to faith.*

Philal. I pray inform me next, *Theophilus*, what influence it is that those Preachers tell their people Faith hath upon Justification; or how it justifieth.

Theoph. I should not have forgotten this, though you had not minded me, in the least, of it: for it is of as great importance to be spoken to, as most of the heads of our past discourse. Observe therefore, That Faith sometimes signifieth in Scripture the Doctrine of faith, or the Gospel: so it is to be understood, *Gal.* 3. 23, 25. and in several other places. But it ordinarily signifieth the vertue or duty of believing; and so it is variously expressed; as by *believing on the Son of God, and the re-*

LXXVII *Two acceptations of the word* Faith.

LXXviii *The vertue of faith variously expressed in Scripture.*

record that God gave of his Son, 1 Joh. 5. 10. *Believing the word or words of Christ,* Joh. 5. 47. *Believing Christ to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world,* Joh. 8. 24. Joh. 11. 26, 27. *Receiving of Christ,* Joh. 1. 12. All which are to be understood in a practical sence. For as the Scriptures scarcely ever call any other the knowledge of God, but that which hath the end of knowledge, *viz.* obedience: so do they make nothing true believing, but that which hath the ends of faith, or causeth men to do those things for the sake of which it is required. Part I.

LXXIX. *How faith justifieth.*

Now as Faith is put for the Doctrine of faith, so those Preachers are content it should justifie as an instrument, *viz.* as it containeth the Covenant of grace, and holdeth forth pardon to sinners; and so it justifieth, as the Law condemneth.

As it signifieth the vertue or duty

Part I. of faith, ſo it juſtifieth as it is the condition of the new Covenant, wherein forgiveneſs of ſin is offered. God the Father is the principally-efficient cauſe of our Juſtification; and ſo it is ſaid, that *it is God that juſtifieth*: Jeſus Chriſt juſtifieth as the onely meritorious, or procuring cauſe; the Goſpel as the inſtrumental cauſe; and faith therein, as the condition without which we cannot be juſtified, and to which that priviledge is aſſured.

The new Covenant offereth pardon of ſin and eternal life to us, upon the condition of believing in Chriſt: *So God loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. He that believeth ſhall be ſaved*, &c. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins.*

Philal. This is a very eaſie account of Faiths juſtifying.

Theoph.

Part I.

Theoph. Nothing ſeems to me to be more plain; as obſcure a buſineſs as 'tis made.

Philal. But what cannot the wit of men make difficult?

LXXX. *The Covenant of grace conditional.*

Theoph. Firſt, there is nothing more evident (as we ſaid) than that the new Covenant is conditional; and that God doth not therein promiſe abſolutely pardon of ſin and the conſequent bleſſings.

Philal. The great place that is produced againſt the conditionality of the Covenant of grace, is that which you ſaid you would ſpeak to, *viz.* that quotation out of *Jeremiah* that we finde in *Heb.* 10.8. where God ſeemeth in his Covenant to promiſe to do all, in order to our eternal happineſs, and to require nothing of us.

Theoph. It is in a good hand: I pray do you anſwer that Objection.

Philal. Were I duller than I am, I think I could eaſily enough appre-

Part I.

hend a ſatisfactory anſwer to it, *viz.* That a condition is there implied: for the meaning of thoſe words [*I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them in their inward parts*] cannot be, *I will do all for them, they need do nothing at all*; this would make all the precepts of the Goſpel moſt wretchedly inſignificant, (nor indeed do any aſſert this, but ſome very monſtrouſly wilde-brain'd people:) nor yet, as appears from many other Scriptures, can *this* be the ſence; *I will ſanctifie their natures, and ſo cauſe them to keep my laws, without their concurrence in that act:* but, *I will afford them my Grace and Spirit, whereby, they co-operating therewith, and not being wilfully wanting to themſelvs, ſhall be enabled ſo to do.* Or, *I will do all that reaſonable creatures can* reaſonably *expect from Me, towards the writing of my laws in their hearts, & putting them into their inward*

LXXXI. Heb. 8. 10. *conſidered.*

ward parts. Whatſoever God may do for *ſome* perſons out of his *ſuper-abundant* grace, doubtleſs this is all that he either here or elſewhere *engageth* himſelf to do for any. Part I.

Theoph. This expoſition of yours is a very good one, moſt agreeable with the analogie of Faith, and fully anſwers the forementioned Objection. But there are very judicious Expoſitors that are led by the conſideration of the verſe following thus to interpret this place, *viz. This is the Covenant that I will make in the times of the Goſpel; I will inſtead of thoſe external and carnal ordinances, which the houſe of Iſrael hath for a long time been obliged to the obſervance of, give them onely ſuch precepts as are moſt agreeable to their reaſon and underſtandings, and ſuch as wherein they may diſcern eſſential goodneſs: and by this great expreſſion of my grace to them,* (as alſo that which is expreſſed in the 12 verſe,

Part I. verſe, namely, aſſurance of pardon to all reforming ſinners, of all paſt wickedneſſes whatſoever, and all preſent frailties and weakneſſes) *I ſhall not onely convince them of their duty, but alſo, ſtrongly encline them to the chearful performance of it.* And then it follows, very pertinently to this ſence, in verſ. 11. *And they ſhall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord: for all ſhall know me, from the leaſt to the greateſt.* i.e. *There ſhall be no need of ſuch pains, in teaching men how they muſt obey the Lord, and what they are to do, as there was under the Law of Moſes, (which conſiſted in obſervations that were onely good becauſe commanded, and had no internal goodneſs in them to commend them to the reaſon of men, and which might cauſe it to prompt them to them;) but the precepts now given, ſhall be found written by every*

man

man in his own heart, ſo that none need be ignorant of what is enjoyned for the ſubſtance of it, that will but conſult the dictates of their own natures. For a confirmation of this ſenſe, ſee *Deut.* 30. 11, 12, 13, 14 verſ. *Moſes* having in the later part of verſ. 10. put the people upon turning to the Lord their God with all their heart and with all their ſoul; and before ſhewed that it was their duty to love the Lord their God with all their heart and ſoul, which you know containeth the ſubſtance of what is enjoyned in the new Covenant, and was no part of that which was required by the Law, that is called in a ſtrict ſence the *Jewiſh & Moſaical, (which,* as the Apoſtle ſaith, *was added becauſe of tranſgreſſion, till the ſeed ſhould come to whom the promiſes were made*; not as any new condition whereby they were to attain to the promiſes, but that they ſhould till they were fulfilled, be

Part I. be restrained and kept under a strict outward discipline backt on by temporal rewards and punishments) I say, having over and above his own Law, exhorted them to the observance of those duties, wherein the substance of those commanded in the Gospel consisteth, (and which may be found sprinkled up and down in the other Prophets, as well as *his* writings, and doubtless were more compleatly delivered to them by tradition from their fathers) he thus saith in the 11 verse, and the three following: *For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: it is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word*

word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayſt do it. By the word in their *heart* at leaſt, we are certainly to underſtand, the forementioned ſpiritual, and eſſentially good precepts: for ſo is it interpreted by S. *Paul*, *Rom.* 10. 6,7,8. Part I.

Philal. I am hugely pleaſed with the Paraphraſe you have given, and muſt needs ſay, that of theſe two (conſidering the context) it ſeemeth the moſt natural.

Theoph. But however, *their* interpretation of this place, that endeavour to prove from it the non-conditionality of the new Covenant, is by no means to be endured; it being of ſo very ill conſequence, and alſo ſo flatly contradicting the apparent ſence of multitudes of Scriptures as it doth; whereby we are aſſured that God expects that the working of *his* and our *own* ſpirits ſhould go together, and be con-

junct

Part I. junct causes co-operating one and the self-same effect.

LXXXII *Men not without all power to co-operate with Gods grace in their conversion.*

Philal. If men have no power, as those people say, to co-operate at all with the grace of God, in the mortification of their lusts, or the renovation of their natures, S. *James* did very strangely forget himself, when he said, *Cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purifie your hearts ye double minded.*

Theoph. The truth is, the Scripture seems one while to give all to *God* in the work of Regeneration and Conversion; and another while to make it wholly mens own act. And as in that place to the *Hebrews*, it may seem, at first sight, that all is to be done by *God*; so doth *God* in other places express himself, as if *man* were to do all in this work: as, *Cast away from you all your iniquities*; *Make you a new heart and a new spirit*; *turn your selves and live ye*. *Wash you, make you clean, put away*

away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well. And you know that I could tire you with ſayings to the ſame purpoſe. Part I.

Philal. Therefore we muſt interpret ſuch places *ſo*, as to reconcile them to each other.

Theoph. And to this end we muſt go in a middle way, and avoid the extremes on both hands, or we ſhall never do ſo. I mean, that where God ſpeaks as if *he* did all in this great work, we are to judge, that he ſuppoſeth mens endeavours; and where he ſpeaks as if *men* were to do all, that he ſuppoſeth the concurrence and aſſiſtance of his own grace. LXXXiii *A middle way to be taken in giving account of mens converſion.*

But as I ſaid that nothing is more evident than that the new Covenant is *conditional* : ſo, ſecondly, there is nothing more *plainly* or *frequently* expreſſed, than that *Faith* is the condition of it ; and therefore I ſhall not need to inſiſt upon it. LXXXiv *Faith the condition of the new Covenant.*

Philal.

Part I.

LXXXV *Of their being accused for the foregoing doctrine, as holding justification by works, and enemies to Gods grace.*

Philal. You said that those Preachers are accused by many Hot men, for this doctrine, as persons Popishly affected, and holding Justification by works; and therefore enemies to the freeness of Gods grace.

Theoph. I foresaw, that in this part of our discourse, you would put me upon vindicating them from this high charge; and therefore when I had occasion given me to do it, I chose (as you may remember) to defer it longer, because this is the propereſt place for it.

Philal. But suppose the consequences of this doctrine were so very foul as those men think they are; would it not be, notwithstanding,

LXXXVI *A digression concerning censuring men upon the account of their opinions.* very uncharitably done of them, to censure the Preachers of it so highly upon that account?

Theoph. Yes verily, *Philalethes*, this would not excuse them at all from unchristian uncharitableness: for they ought to hope (seeing they profess

profeſs to magnifie free grace no leſs than themſelvs, and concern themſelvs to confute the Papiſts as much as any, not to ſay more) that they do not underſtand the evil conſequences of their Doctrine; and that, if they did, they would moſt willingly and freely renounce it. Part I.

Philal. If thoſe Preachers ſhould retaliate, (as I hope they are better Chriſtians than to do ſo) they might call theſe their cenſurers worſe than Papiſts; I mean, *Libertines* and *Ranters*: for they are as ſtrongly perſwaded, that *their* notions about juſtifying Faith, and ſome other, lead to *Looſeneſs* and *Libertiniſm*, as theſe are, that *theirs* lead to *Popery*.

Theoph. But they dare not, I hope, ſo much as ſuſpect, that thoſe of them that ſeem to make any conſcience of their ways, are at all aware of the Poiſon that is in ſome of their Opinions; but judge that their *meaning*

Part I. *ing* is much better than their *Faith.*

Philal. I for my part can truly ſay, that I think not at all hardly of them for the ſake of their falſe Tenets, ſo long as I do not obſerve that they practiſe upon them; but I am ſometimes very ſhrewdly tempted to fear, upon the account of the Reviling and Cenſuring not a few of them are guilty of, that they are no better than meer pretenders to Religion, as great a profeſſion as they make of it: For S. *James* hath taught me, that, *He that ſeemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that mans Religion is vain.*

Theoph. But perhaps they may mean as honeſtly in the *one* as in the *other*; and 'tis poſſible that their angry expreſſions may not be the effects of *malice*, but of a certain kinde of *zeal.*

Philal. Well, *Theophilus*, I will endeavour after more of your charitable temper: If you judge too well

well of thoſe people, it is a ſafe and good extreme: *Charity*, I confeſs, *hopeth all things*, and *believeth all things*, even there, where are too great temptations to the contrary. Part I.

Theoph. When we can put a favourable conſtruction upon our brothers faults, and not offer overgreat violence to our own Reaſon, we ought to do it; and to look upon them as proceeding rather from infirmity, than from a principle of immorality. But yet, *Philalethes*, I would not have you take me to be more charitable than I am: for though I will not conclude thoſe cenſorious people to be all *hypocrites*, yet I dare confidently pronounce them, at beſt, but of the *loweſt fourm* in Chriſts School; as great attainments as they may be thought to be arrived at, by men of greater honeſty than underſtanding.

Philal. But we have forgotten

Part I.

our buſineſs all this while.

Theoph. You do well to minde me of it. You expect, *Philalethes*, that I ſhould vindicate thoſe friends of ours, and all that are of their minde in the point in hand, from oppoſing free grace, and holding the Popiſh doctrine of Juſtification by works. They are ſo far from being guilty in theſe particulars, that I am amazed at their ignorance, that ſay they are, upon ſuch *ſlight* grounds, or rather upon *none* at all. Nor do I think that an eaſier task can be impoſed on any man, that hath but a competent underſtanding of our Saviours Goſpel, than to clear the foregoing account of Faiths juſtifying from thoſe hateful ſequels. For, whereas 'tis pretended, that *that* doctrine is an enemy to free grace; I may ask thoſe that pretend ſo, how Juſtification is free, ſeeing it is neceſſary to believe in *their* ſence in order to it: they muſt at leaſt acknow-

LXXXvii *A Vindication of the foregoing account of faiths juſtifying from being oppoſite to free grace.*

knowledge, that if not ſo much as that lazie faith of theirs were requiſite, it would be ſo much the freer. Part I.

Philal. But the *Antinomians* will tell you, that they make no faith at all, nor any thing elſe neceſſary or requiſite to their Juſtification; and that their faith conſiſts in believing that they are already juſtified, and that they were ſo before they were born too; nay, as was ſaid, that their Juſtification is as old as God himſelf; for he could be but from eternity.

Theoph. I confeſs theſe blades are *ſwinging* aſſertors of the freeneſs of their Juſtification; and therefore the Queſtion I now asked is nothing to *them*: but I am ſure it ſignifieth ſomething to the ſecond ſort I told you of, and that are gotten about one little remove from formal *Antinomians*. But I ſay moreover, that ſuch a Faith as that we have deſcribed is abſolutely neceſſary in it

Part I. ſelf, to make us capable of that priviledge, and meet objects of Gods grace.

Will they ſay, that the Kings pardoning a notorious Traytor is ever the leſs free, becauſe that as far as he could judge of his heart, he looked on him as a perſon that was reſolved to become for the future a Loyal ſubject? Me-thinks they ſhould not; and that for this reaſon, becauſe ſuch a purpoſe is but neceſſary to qualifie him for a pardon; it being an act of greater fondneſs and folly, than of grace and goodneſs, to forgive an offender that obſtinately perſiſts in his diſobedience. Or ſuppoſe his Majeſtie ſhould confer upon one of them an honourable Office in his Court, would he ſay he bought it, or that it was not freely beſtowed upon him, becauſe his Majeſtie required that before his inveſtiture, and admiſſion into it, he ſhould learn good Breeding, and

how

how to behave himſelf in ſuch a Place? Surely he would not; and that for the already-mentioned reaſon: this he could not but know was no more than neceſſary to be enjoyned him; for otherwiſe he could not be at all fit for the Office; and the King would greatly diſparage his wiſdom in making ſuch a choice. And as little cauſe have any to imagine, that to aſſert that God will pardon, and receive into ſpecial favour, none but ſuch, as ſo believe, as to be heartily willing to obey his Sons Goſpel, is to derogate from the freeneſs of his grace. Beſides, that glory and bleſſedneſs which conſiſteth in the enjoyment of God in the other world, which is the conſequent of Juſtification, cannot be enjoyed by a wicked man: the joys of heaven are of ſo ſpiritual a nature, that carnal ſouls are as uncapable of them, as are beaſts of the intellectual delights of

Part I. men. They are onely the pure in heart that *can*, as well as that *ſhall* ſee God. Heathens will teach us this doctrine, if we are to learn it.

Much leſs then, in the third place, is this doctrine of a working Faiths being the condition of our Juſtification, at all a leſſening of the freeneſs of Gods grace; when as thoſe that preach it do withal aſſert, that this faith is Gods own gift, a grace of his bleſſed Spirit. They ſay indeed, and that moſt truly, that we are to uſe the means appointed us by him for the obtaining of it; but they tell their hearers alſo, that it muſt come from God, if they ever have it. Could we work this faith in our ſelvs, and ſtood in no need of the divine aſſiſtance; conſidering what hath been ſaid, it would make our Juſtification to be never the leſs free; much leſs reaſon then is there, that thoſe ſhould be charged with making it otherwiſe, that preach that

that doctrine of Faiths being the condition of Juſtification, when they declare that the power whereby we perform that condition comes from God. Part I.

Philal. I am ſure that I have no power to invent any one Reply by way of objection.

Theoph. Well then, we'll to their next Cavil; namely, that to hold this doctrine, is to maintain Juſtification by works: which is indeed the ſame in their *ſence* with the former; but it is fit it ſhould be diſtinctly ſpoken to, becauſe S. *Paul* (in his Epiſtles eſpecially to the *Romans* and *Galatians*) doth ſo often deny *works* to have an influence into Juſtification, and is found oppoſing them one while to *Grace*, and another while to *Faith* as to this matter. I cannot ſtand to cite the particular places; but the conſideration of theſe following things will enable any man to reconcile them with this

Part I.

this Doctrine at the firſt ſight of them.

Lxxxviii. *A vindication of that Doctrine from aſſerting juſtification by works in S.* Paul's *ſence.*

1. By *the works of the Law*, whereby the Apoſtle ſaith that men cannot be juſtified, we are frequently to underſtand thoſe of the Jewiſh Law, their External Rites and Obſervances. And ſo they are to be underſtood in *moſt*, if not *all* the places in the Epiſtle to the *Galatians*. And by the underſtanding of that one thing, that Epiſtle may with eaſe be defended from patronizing the *Antinomian* doctrine. The chief deſigne of which (as is moſt apparent) being to vindicate the liberty of the Chriſtian Religion from the Judaical Yoke, which being by the Judaizing *Galatian* Converts impoſed upon the Chriſtian Gentiles as abſolutely and indiſpenſably neceſſary, was like to prove a mighty obſtacle to the progreſs of the Goſpel among them.

2. In ſome other places, by *works*

are meant abſolutely perfect, and altogether faultleſs ones. And we are told, that, as the Law of *Moſes* cannot, nor ever could juſtifie, by reaſon of its *own* weakneſs; ſo, the Law of perfect obedience now cannot, by reaſon of *ours*. Part I.

3. We may ſometimes underſtand *any* works, of what nature ſoever, conſidered as meritorious cauſes. Could we obey perfectly, we cannot merit thereby the pardon of paſt ſins: nay, had we never ſinned, we could *deſerve* no reward at our Creators hands, our righteouſneſs being not at all profitable to him; much leſs then can the imperfect works of ſinners be meritorious.

4. Meer external works performed by our own power in our unſanctified ſtate, that is, ſuch as proceed not from an inward principle of life, may in other places be underſtood.

But we have no ground ever to underſtand by *works* when oppoſed to

Part I.

to Grace or Faith, inherent holineſs, or new obedience to the Goſpel-precepts. I dare promiſe an unprejudiced perſon, that, reading the ſeveral Scriptures where works are ſo oppoſed, he will be ſatisfied that they are not any where to be otherwiſe underſtood than of one of theſe four ſorts.

Lxxxix. *By works when oppoſed to Grace or Faith, new obedience never meant.*

So that as *works* ſignifie ſincere obedience to Chriſts Goſpel, neither I nor thoſe Preachers can account it any ſcandal to have it ſaid of us, that we hold Juſtification by *works*; nor can we deſerve to have it thought that we have one bit the more of a Pope in our bellies upon that account. And why any man ſhould be more ſhie of acknowledging this than S. *James* was, (who ſaith in plain terms, *A man is juſtified by* works, *and not by faith onely*; and that *Abraham was juſtified by* works) I cannot underſtand. Nor need we ſo mince it, as to ſay that

XC. *No crime to hold juſtification by works in S. James his ſence.*

faith

faith juſtifieth our *perſons*, and *works* our *faith*: for underſtanding *works*, I ſay, for a working faith, our *perſons* (if ever they be) muſt be juſtified by them. I would not that *Proteſtants* ſhould give ſuch advantage to the ſottiſh *Papiſts*, as to be ſhie of uſing any Scripture-language; and, by being ſo, to give them occaſion to think that we are in the other extreme from *them*, and have a ſlight opinion of good works. And I think it deſirable that we would ceaſe to prefer S. *Paul*'s language before S. *James* his; and not more interpret S. *James* by S. *Paul*, than S. *Paul* by S. *James*, they being both alike Apoſtles, and their Epiſtles alike Scripture; but that we would be content to interpret them by each other. And then, I dare ſay, this Controverſie would quickly be at an end among us; and we ſhould have no adverſary to contend with, about this point, but the Papiſt onely. *Philal.*

Part I.

XCI. *S. Paul's language not to be preferred before S. James his.*

Part I.

Philal. I am of your minde.

Theoph. But, *Philalethes*, don't you remember that you set me a method, and desired me first to discourse of those our Friends *Practices*, and next of their *Opinions*.

Philal. Yes, very well.

Theoph. And you see, how well I have observ'd it. But the best of it is, I told you then, that I would not promise you never to confound those two together; nor, indeed, could I have been as good as my word if I had: for I could not, as I ought, discourse of their Preaching, and not take in some of their Doctrine.

Par. II. But I will now, in a more distinct manner, give you an account of their *Opinions*. They may be referred to matters of *Doctrine* and *Discipline*. As to the former, they profess to dissent from none that have been held to be Fundamentals of the Christian Faith, either by the *Primitive*,

I. *A more distinct account of their Opinions.*

mitive, or beſt Reformed *Modern* Churches: And heartily to ſubſcribe to the 39 Articles of our Church, taking that liberty in the interpretation of them, that is allowed by the Church her ſelf. Though it is moſt reaſonable to preſume, that ſhe requires Subſcription to them, as to an Inſtrument of Peace onely.

Part II

II. *Of their judgment in Doctrinals.*

III. *In what ſence the Church of* England *impoſeth ſubſcription to the 39 Articles.*

IV. *The Lord Primate of* Ireland *his teſtimony.*

Philal. So the late moſt Reverend and Learned Archbiſhop of *Armagh* ſeveral times expreſſeth the ſence of the Church of *England*, as to her requiring Subſcription to thoſe Articles. *The Church of England*, ſaith he in his *Schiſm Guarded*, p. 396. *doth not define any of theſe Queſtions as neceſſary to be believed either* neceſſitate medii, *or* neceſſitate præcepti, *which is much leſs; but onely bindeth her ſons, for peace ſake, not to oppoſe them.* And pag. 150. he doth farther thus expreſs himſelf. *We do not ſuffer any man to reject the 39 Articles of the Church*

Part II *Church of England at his pleaſure; yet neither do we look upon them as eſſentials of Saving Faith, or Legacies of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; but in a mean, as pious opinions fitted for the preſervation of unity: neither do we oblige any man to* believe *them, but onely not* contradict *them.*

Theoph. I thank you, *Philalethes*, for theſe citations out of ſo excellent an Author; which are no ſmall confirmation of the truth of that aſſertion of mine, which did occaſion them. But to go on: Thoſe opinions in Doctrinals that thoſe Divines look upon themſelvs as moſt obliged to manifeſt their diſapprobation of, and to confute, are ſuch as either directly, or in their evident conſequences, tend to beget in mens mindes unworthy thoughts of God, and unlovely notions of his nature; or to encourage profaneneſs, or diſcourage from diligence and induſtry

V. *What Doctrines they moſt endeavor to confute.*

duſtry in the ways of holineſs; as, by what hath been ſaid, you have in part underſtood. Par. II

Philal. 'Tis ſtrange to me, *Theophilus*, that any that underſtandingly believe the being of God ſhould entertain an unlovely notion of his nature; for not to have the *moſt lovely*, is to deprive him of his very Godhead. He muſt needs be as good, as good can be, and have all perfections attracting love concentred in him in the higheſt degree poſſible: He muſt be infinitely merciful, of perfectly unſpotted righteouſneſs, purity, and holineſs, (which I eſteem as no leſs lovely qualifications, than that of mercy) or he cannot be God. Nay, no man, I ſhould think, (that is not a very Atheiſt) can doubt but that all the amiable qualities that we ſee in good men, are but ſo many effluviums, if I may ſo call them, or emanations from thoſe that are in God;

VI. Philalethes *his repreſentation of Gods nature.*

Par. *II.* and therefore muſt needs be, in an unconceivably greater meaſure in *him*, where they are originally, than in *them*, where they are but derivatively. We learn from very Heathens that ſuch qualities are irradiations ſliding into mens ſouls from God, and that they proceed from a divine *afflatus*; who alſo tell us, that God is not onely ὑπατος, but likewiſe ἄριστος, the *beſt*, as well as chiefeſt and moſt ſupreme being. And they give a moſt lovely deſcription of Gods eſſence; and make him, you know, to be no leſs juſt and gracious, than wiſe and powerful; as, I need not tell you, may be ſhewn in a world of inſtances.

But that any *Chriſtian* ſhould be able to form to himſelf an unlovely *idæa* and conception of God, is to me matter of the greateſt aſtoniſhment; he being ſo excellently repreſented in the *New*, and alſo in the *Old* Teſtament. In the *New*, we

we finde his definition to be Love it Par. II
ſelf; and that the way to be his lively
images, and like to him, is not to af-
fect to be men of great power and
knowledge, but to be moſt holy and
righteous, loving and merciful. In
a word, the new Teſtament, I am
ſure, gives the moſt amiable account
imaginable of the Divine nature:
And ſo doth the Old too; even when
God appeared in the moſt frightful
form, did he proclaim himſelf, *The
Lord, the Lord God gracious and
merciful, pardoning iniquity, tranſ-
greſſion, and ſin:* And though it
follows, that he *will in no wiſe clear
the guilty*, i. e. the impenitent; yet
that is ſo far from being a contradi-
ction to his goodneſs, that it is a far-
ther declaration of it; for otherwiſe
he would not have that part thereof
that is called righteouſneſs. He is
there repreſented, as a God *good* to
all, and whoſe *mercies* are over *all*
his works: As a God, whoſe ways

Part II are all juſt and right, and whoſe ſoul abominates all evil. It would be a very long work to go over all the places where we finde ſuch accounts of God as theſe are; and it would finde us employment, I believe, for ſome *days*.

Theoph. How dearly do I love you, *Philalethes*, for the moſt worthy conception that I perceive you have lodg'd in your ſoul, of the Divine nature! 'Tis pitie, me-thinks, that you and I are not Nameſakes: I loved you very *ſincerely* ſince my firſt knowledge of you, but now *paſſionately*. And I'le no longer account you my *Friend* onely, but you ſhall be my deareſt *Brother*, and my *Second ſelf* too, for the future.

Philal. How do you *tranſport* me, *Theophilus*, with theſe almoſt-*rapturous* expreſſions of Affection! But I cannot underſtand how I have deſerved them, by any thing I have now ſaid: doubtleſs there is no

Chri-

Chriſtian, no, nor any *Theiſt* neither, but will ſay the ſame. And though I prefer *your* name before *mine own*, yet is *mine* given me for nought, if I did not *thus* ſpeak of God; for then, to be ſure, I could make no pretence to be a friend to Truth. Part II

Theoph. But you ſpake, what I now heard from you, with ſuch an *impetus*, as is a *demonſtration* to me, that you have a moſt quick and deep ſenſe of what you ſaid, and that you are infinitely concerned that it ſhould be true.

Philal. But I pray, Sir, anſwer me; Are there any *Chriſtians* that dare *deny* this, nay, that will not moſt *heartily acknowledge* it?

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, I dare not ſay there are; but I dare ſay this, That there are too too many that will ſpeak ſuch things of God, as moſt apparently contradict it.

Par. II

Philal. Would to God you had no ground for this assertion; but I know, to my frequent great trouble, that there is too good ground for it; and that some, whom I cannot but hope are sincerely good men, do with great and mighty zeal defend such Opinions as are, in my judgement, no less contrary to the goodness and holiness of Gods nature, than the thickest darkness to the cleerest light.

VII. *Consequences of Opinions not to be charged on all those that hold them.*

Theoph. We must not by any means, I am more and more convinced, charge the consequences of Opinions upon all those that hold them: for there is nothing I have a clearer perception of, than that the Notions of some, whom I verily perswade my self are pious Christians, and very true lovers of God and goodness, do immediately tend to rob God of his goodness, (in which word I imply all his Moral perfections) and to lay a foundation for im-

impiety and irreligion.

Philal. I know the Notions you chiefly mean, are, the making of mens ſins, and conſequent miſery, the unavoidable effects of Gods *Decrees*.

Par. II

VIII. *That they ſet themſelvs againſt the Doctrines of Gods abſolute decreeing mens ſin and miſery.*

Theoph. You could not well miſs of *my* meaning, nor I of *yours*; theſe Doctrines muſt needs be principally in both our thoughts: And I muſt tell you, that the Divines we are diſcourſing of do ſet themſelvs againſt both theſe in good earneſt: And they profeſs that they do ſo for no other reaſon, than becauſe they have a moſt clear ſenſe of the miſchievous effects of them.

Philal. But do all thoſe that hold that God doth abſolutely predetermine men to eternal miſery, make him abſolutely to decree mens ſins too, in order to it? I think they do not.

Theoph. No; there are many that aſſert the one, that no leſs deny the

Par. II IX. *That thoſe two are not to be ſeparated.*

other: but I confeſs I do not underſtand how they can. For if men are by God unavoidably and abſolutely determined to the *end*, he muſt do more than decree, barely to *permit* the means: for they muſt neceſſarily ſin, that Gods abſolute decree may infallibly take effect; which it is poſſible it might not, if they were onely *permitted*, and not *neceſſitated* thereunto; for then mankinde might have never fallen.

Philal I wonder that all ſhould not ſee this. But, *Theophilus*, why ſhould thoſe that maintain that deſperate Doctrine of Gods abſolute decreeing mens ſins, be ſo ſhie as not to acknowledge him the *author* alſo of them?

Theoph. I do not ſee that they need be ſo; and therefore there are thoſe of them that are not; and that tell us, that to boggle at acknowledging God the author of ſin, is to *fear where no fear is.*

Philal.

Philal. I would, for my part, be an *Atheiſt*, before I would imagine ſuch a monſtrous thing of God.

Theoph. And leſs you would diſhonour him in being ſo: for as *Plutarch* ſaith, *I had rather poſterity would ſay, There was never ſuch a one as Plutarch, than that he was an unjuſt and vicious perſon:* ſo 'tis more diſhonourable to the infinitely-juſt and holy God, to aſſert that he is the author of ſin, than to ſay that there is no God at all.

Philal. But that Doctrine, with its appendant, will (in my opinion) not onely make Him the firſt cauſe of mens being ſinners, but alſo to ſet men the worſt example to encourage them ſtill in ſinning: which is ſo horrid, that I even quake to expreſs it.

Theoph. I gueſs whereabout you are, *Philalethes*: Thoſe Doctrines make their defenders to aſſert, that there are two Wills in God, where-

of

Part II

of one is perfectly contrary to the other, *viz.* his Secret and Reveled will: And though he profeſſeth kindneſs to all men, and ſaith, nay and ſweareth too, that he *willeth not the death of ſinners* themſelvs, but had rather they would *turn from their wickedneſs and live*; yet, according to thoſe Doctrines, this is but a declaration of his *Voluntas ſigni*; the plain Engliſh of which phraſe is this; *A meer copie of his Countenance.* The like to which ſhould one aſſert concerning any one of thoſe that talk after this rate, I am ſure he would take it in greateſt diſdain, and think himſelf not a little reproached.

X. *That thoſe doctrines make their defenders aſſert two wills in in God, and the one contrary to the other; by which means other ſad conſequences alſo follow.*

Philal. From thence it follows too plainly alſo, that God giveth Laws to the generality, to the very intent that they may break them, and ſo aggravate their condemnation; notwithſtanding that he profeſſeth even a *paſſionate* deſire, that men

men would obſerve them, and ſo be made happie. And by this means, moſt mens obligations to God for the many *temporal* mercies they receive from him are quite ſtruck off, and made to be no expreſſions of his goodneſs to them, but the quite contrary; whereas he tells us, (as was ſaid but now) that *he is good to all*, and that *his tender mercies are over all his works*; and that *the whole earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord.* This is likewiſe from thence a ſequel too plain and natural, That Jeſus Chriſt is not onely *eventually*, but alſo *intentionally*, the greateſt curſe that ever befel the world; and a far greater expreſſion of the Fathers *hatred* than of his *love*, notwithſtanding that he himſelf hath ſaid, that he *came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be ſaved*: and that, *So God loved the world, that he gave his onely begotten Son*, &c. Part II

Part II &c. For if the forementioned Doctrines be true, our Saviours coming was to aggravate the condemnation of the generality of men (which would be far more properly called *the world*, than *a very few*) for not believing in him, who never died for them, ſo much as to put them into a poſſibility of being ſaved; though he declared that *he gave himſelf a ranſome* for the *vulgus*, or multitude of the people, (for ſo the word πολλοὶ, which is rendered *many*, doth, among the Greeks, moſt commonly ſignifie; as our Lexicons tell us, and *Vatablus* alſo upon that place) and S. *Paul* ſaith, He *gave himſelf a ranſome for* ALL, and did *taſte death for* EVERY *man*; and that he is *the Saviour of* ALL *men*, though *eſpecially of thoſe that believe*: and though he ſadly bewailed mens *not coming to him, that they might have life*; and *wept over Jeruſalem* for her obſtinate perſiſting

ing in unbelief, and moſt pathetically with tears wiſhed, *that ſhe had known, in that her day, the things that belonged unto her peace.* I could go on in inſtances of this nature, as------ Part II

Theoph. But I pray, *Philalethes*, do not: for they are grating to my ears, and moſt grievous to me. And it troubleth me to the very *ſoul*, that any (*good* people eſpecially) ſhould entertain (and much more, ſhould be zealous for) ſuch Notions as are attended with ſo long a train of moſt diſmally-ſad Conſequences, and ſo greatly reflecting diſhonour upon our infinitely-holy and good God.

Philal. I fear this kinde of diſcourſe hath put you into one of your old dumps of Melancholy; for me-thinks you all of a ſuddain look very dejectedly.

Theoph. No, *Philalethes*, there is no fear of that; but I would willingly

Part II lingly be more concerned at any dishonour that is done to God, and his Son Jesus, than at any personal evil. Well, what was it that immediately occasioned this last talk?

Philal. The ill use that is made of that distinction of Gods Secret and Reveled will.

Theoph. You say well, it was so.

Philal. But is that distinction to be found fault with?

XI. *Of opposing Gods secret to his reveled will.*

Theoph. I see *your* memory needs rubbing up as well as *mine*. I did not at all except against that distinction, but against opposing Gods *secret* to his *reveled* will. And now I adde, that whatsoever God saith he intends, he *really* doth so; and that *his* declarations are to be understood, as we would *any* honest mans. But to deal freely with you, I should not be at all sorry, if the distinction of *voluntas signi & beneplaciti* were quite thrown out of doors.

Philal.

Philal. But what ſay you to that of Gods commanding *Abraham* to offer up his ſon *Iſaac* ? Did he intend he ſhould be offered up ? Sure no.

Theoph. Nor did God ſay he intended it ; but onely for *tryal* bade *Abraham* do it.

Philal. So it may be ſaid, that God may not, as well, really intend, that all ſhould obſerve his Laws, to whom he gives them.

Theoph. But he plainly and often declares, that he gives them for that end ; and moreover hath imprinted them in mens *ſouls*, as well as written them in his *Book* : and, as I ſaid, expreſſeth a *deſire* that men would obſerve them, and yeeld obedience to them, *i. e.* do what lies in them ſo to do. And I hope that none will ſay otherwiſe, than that it is every ones duty to believe that God would have him obey his Laws : but it was not *Abraham*'s duty to believe that

Part II that God would have him to ſacrifice his ſon ; but onely to *do* it, except he interpoſed.

Philal. But it appeareth from the ſtory, that *Abraham* did believe this.

Theoph. I grant that ; but, I ſay, he was not *bound* to believe it, though he did : for no man can be obliged to believe a falſity : And beſides, he could have no reaſon to be confident that God did not intend onely to *try* him by that Command, as the event proved he did. But ſuppoſe it had fallen out otherwiſe, that would not at all have altered the caſe ; for who dares ſay but that God may, if he pleaſeth, give commands to his ſervants, when he doth not intend they ſhould do as he biddeth them, but onely to make an experiment of their readineſs to obey him ? None ſure will deny the uſe of this liberty to *any earthly* parents towards their children;

dren; or maſters towards their ſervants. And therefore I ſay that *Abraham* had no juſt cauſe to conclude that this was not his Creators deſigne in that command; though he took it for granted, that it was his purpoſe that he ſhould do as he bade him. Part II

Philal. What you ſay is clear enough: But did not God, by the Prophet, tell *Nineveh* that in fourty days ſhe ſhould be deſtroyed? did he mean as he ſpake then?

Theoph. Yes doubtleſs that he did; for there was a condition ſo plainly implied in that threatning, (*viz. If ſhe repented not*) that the *Ninevites* themſelvs were inclined, of their own accords, ſo to underſtand it. And it is ordinary among men to imply conditions in both *threatnings* and *promiſes* that ſound abſolutely, but eſpecially in threatnings; and ſo ſuch are uſually underſtood. Nay, ſome conditions are

Par. II always underſtood by us in the moſt abſolute promiſes and threatnings that are ever uttered by the tongues of men; and muſt be ſo.

Philal. The truth is, I am but a ſorry Objector.

Theoph. Your Objections have as much weight in them, I think, as any that the *Scripture* affordeth: but, I confeſs, ſome more baffling ones may be urged from ſeeming *Reaſon:* but whether we can anſwer them or no, we ought not, in the leaſt, to be ſhaken by them, much leſs to be overcome. For if I may not believe any thing againſt which I am not able to anſwer all Objections; I muſt reſolve to believe nothing at all, & to ſet up for a perfect Sceptick. There are Arguments invented by Wits againſt the certainty of evidence from Senſe; which he muſt have a good Metaphyſical pate of his own, that is able to anſwer; would all men therefore that han't ſuch heads do fooliſh-

XII. *That we muſt reſolve to believe nothing at all, if we may believe nothing againſt which we cannot anſwer all Objections.*

foolishly in giving undoubted credit to their own senses? I know no man that can give a satisfactory answer to an Argument that is brought against the possibility of so close an union of the particles of matter each with other, as to make a solid body; but will any man in his wits therefore doubt, whether or no there be any such thing? The Argument that is brought for the infinite divisibility of matter, hath hitherto puzzled the most acute Philosophers, and so it is like to do to the worlds end; but yet I cannot imagine that any one doth notwithstanding really believe it. And from thence, all bodies may be proved to be of a like bigness; and that a Mountain is as small as an Ant-heap, and an Ant as big as either: And this with so great a shew of reason, as I must acknowledge I cannot answer; but ought I therefore to suspect whether this be not true? Par. II

Part II So there are ſome Metaphyſical Niceties that may ſeem to make the Opinion (and thoſe it is founded on) probable, which we laſt expreſſed our ſelvs againſt: but what of that? All we ought thence to infer is no more than this, *That Man is a weak, ſhallow creature.*

Philal. But our Adverſaries will ſay, Then you may believe *their* doctrine, for all the ſtrong Objections you think you can make againſt it; and anſwer them all with an *Oh the depth!*

Theoph. But what ſaith S. *Auſtin? Becauſe we cannot underſtand things that are* difficult, *ſhall we therefore deny thoſe that are* plain?

Philal. I wiſh that good Father had always born in his minde that Saying.

Theoph. I wiſh ſo too: But to our buſineſs: That doctrine doth as evidently contradict the natural notions God hath imprinted in the original

ginal conſtitution of humane ſouls, as can be; at leaſt to *me* it ſeems ſo to do, and ſo doth it to thouſands of others that are neither Fools nor Mad-men: and I muſt adde, that I cannot queſtion but it would to *all*, that will be but perſwaded freely to conſult thoſe innate notions: And beſides, it is expreſly againſt the whole ſtrain of Scripture from *Geneſis* to the *Revelation*. Part II. XIII. *That the foremention'd doctrine evidently contradicts our natural notions.*

Philal. But you know that there are divers *Scriptures* that ſeem to make for Gods abſolute decreeing mens *damnation*, and their *ſins* too, which are much urged.

Theoph. Truly, *Philalethes*, if our Tranſlators had been pleaſed, they might with the alteration of but one little particle for another of the ſame ſignification, have prevented the taking *almoſt* any arguments out of Scripture to prove Gods decreeing mens *ſins*, any otherwiſe than barely to permit them. I

Par. II. mean, if they had put [*will*] in a multitude of places, where mens ſins are foretold, in ſtead of [*ſhall*]. The [*ſhalls*] make thoſe places look as if they contained declarations of *Decrees*, whenas [*wills*] would have made it at firſt ſight to appear that they contain onely *predictions*, and expreſſions of Gods *foreknowledge* that men *would* commit ſuch and ſuch ſins, not of his *will* and *purpoſe* that they *ſhould*. I heartily wiſh that Authority would pleaſe to command the Printers to make that little alteration in their future Impreſſions of the Bible. You may ſmile at this as an odde Fancie; but I aſſure you, I am upon good grounds confident, that it would be to very good purpoſe ſo to do.

Philal. No Wiſe-man or Scholar will fetch an argument from ſuch a triſle to prove *that* or any *other* opinion.

Theoph. What of that? the generality

nerality of people are neither Scholars nor yet wise: and I have great cause to suspect, that the vulgar sort have that wretched doctrine insensibly instilled into them by the frequent reading and hearing such passages as these, *viz.* *In the later days perillous times* [*shall*] *come*; *men* [*shall*] *be lovers of themselves, covetous, proud*, &c. *There* [*shall*] *be false teachers, who* [*shall*] *privily bring in damnable heresies*, &c. *And many* [*shall*] *follow their pernicious ways*, &c. And there are *innumerable* passages of this nature. But then, *Philalethes*, whatever Scriptures are brought to prove either the one or the other doctrine by, it must needs be acknowledged, that they are but very few, in comparison of those that (most *evidently* say I, but) all will confess do *seemingly* contradict them. And which is the safest course, think you, in reconciling seemingly-contrary Par. II

Part II places to each other? To interpret a multitude of *plain* Scriptures by a few difficult ones, or a few difficult ones by a multitude of plain ones?

XIV. *Which is the ſafeſt courſe in reconciling ſeemingly contradictory ſcriptures.*

Philal. The later, without all doubt. But it will be ſaid that the Scriptures that make for thoſe Doctrines, are as plain as thoſe that make againſt them, though, as to their number, there is no compariſon betwixt them.

Theoph. But I ſay they are more difficult, in that, their moſt obvious ſence doth, (as none can deny) at leaſt, *ſeemingly* contradict the natural notions of our ſouls; which the plaineſt ſence of the other no leſs gratifie. But however, is it not much the better way, to underſtand a *few* Scriptures, in their leſs obvious ſence, to reconcile them to the moſt obvious ſence of a multitude of others; than to underſtand a multitude of Scriptures in their *leaſt* obvious ſence, to reconcile them to the

moſt

most obvious of, in compariſon with them, extremely few? Par. II

Philal. I have, ſince I ſuffered my ſelf to think at all freely, been of your minde, and concluded that the Scriptures produced on the other ſide muſt neceſſarily be taken in another ſence than *that* they fix upon; except we will make them contradict the greateſt part of the Bible beſides: And thoſe that endeavour to reconcile all other to thoſe Scriptures, make the Bible an extremely more difficult Book, than I am verily perſwaded God hath made it.

XV. Theophilus *can believe no ſence of Scripture that doth contradict ſelf-evident notions.*

Theoph. For my part, I can believe no ſence of any Scripture true, that plainly contradicts the ſelf-evident notions of Good and Evil, that God hath put into my ſoul, and were born with me: For, (as hath been ſhew'd) I could have no reaſon to believe the Scriptures to be Gods word, no, nor yet any thing I am ſure God himſelf ſaith, to be infallibly true,

were

Par. II were it not for thoſe notions. And don't you remember that 'twas proved alſo, that the goodneſs of the Doctrine delivered is neceſſary to convince us, that it is of God? Mankinde hath a natural ſenſe of Moral good and evil.

Philal. But thoſe of the other Perſwaſion ſay, That whatſoever God doth, is juſt and good, becauſe he doth it. I am ſure many of them, at leaſt, will.

XVI. *Of that opinion, That whatſoever God doth is therefore good and juſt becauſe he doth it.*

Theoph. There is no other way to defend their doctrine, but to prove that: But do not thoſe, in ſo ſaying, plainly make nothing in it ſelf to be juſt or unjuſt, good or evil? And ſo, in calling God a juſt God, ſay juſt nothing of him, (pardon the Quibble, I deſigned it not) that is, no more than this, that he wills what he wills: and I wonder who does not. Thus you ſee, they are forced to make good and evil to depend upon arbitrary will; and ſo

ſo make the Holy God a meer Wilful Being, and his *nature* perfectly indifferent to any thing: And thence it follows, that it is conſiſtent enough with the Divine nature, to forbid all that which by being *commanded* is now called *Holineſs*, and by that means make it wickedneſs; and to command all that which by being forbidden is now called wickedneſs, and by that means make it Holineſs. But if this doth not raze and overturn the foundation of all Religion, no opinion in the world tends ſo to do. Par. II

Philal. If *Abraham* was of that minde, he ſtrangely forgot himſelf, when he ſaid to his Maker, *Shall not the Judge of all the earth do* right? And whether he was of that minde or no, if the Doctrine be true, he was guilty of a monſtrouſly-abſurd impertinence in ſo ſaying; and yet (which is more ſtrange) he had no check for it.

Theoph.

Part II

Theoph. Nay, did not God himſelf appeal to mens innate notions, and ſo confute that doctrine, when he ſaid to the Rebellious Jews, *Are not my ways equal, and your ways unequal?* Can thoſe men think that he onely meant, *Are not* my *ways ſuch as I pleaſe to fancie, and yours ſuch as it is my pleaſure to diſlike?* Who would dare to fix ſuch an expoſtulation as that on the infinitely-wiſe God?

Philal. Well, I am clearly ſenſible, that nothing reveled by God can poſſibly contradict thoſe principles that are impreſſed in (as I think) *indelible* characters upon the ſouls of men; and therefore whatſoever places may ſeem to ſpeak mens being neceſſitated to be either ſinners, or miſerable, *muſt* be underſtood in another ſence: eſpecially ſeeing that God hath ſo often declared that mens ruine is of themſelvs, and that their help is to be found in him; and that

that he willeth not their *death*, but the contrary; (and therefore much leſs can he will their ſins; as he hath alſo, as plainly as can be, declared:) And moreover affords them means whereby they may obtain happineſs; (which, who will not ſay that all that enjoy them are greatly beholden to God for?) and expreſſeth his grace and good will to them all without any exception. Part II

Theoph. You have put me in minde of a paſſage I have met with in a Sermon of a moſt pious and learned Divine now in heaven; which, when I read it, did greatly affect me. It is this: *Conſider impartially with your ſelvs, what an unreaſonable, horrible thing it is, ſeeing there are ſo many ſeveral frequent expreſſions of Gods general love, and gracious favour to Mankinde, inforced and ſtrengthened with ſuch proteſtations, and ſolemn oaths, that the cunningeſt Linguiſt of you all*

Part II *all cannot, in your whole lives ſtudy, conceive or frame expreſſions more full and ſatisfactory. I ſay, is it not deſperate madneſs, for a man to ſhew ſuch hatred and abomination at the comfortable and gracious promiſes of God, that he can be content to ſpend almoſt his whole age in contriving and hunting after interpretations utterly contradicting and deſtroying the plain apparent ſence of thoſe Scriptures: And will be glad, and heartily comforted, to hear tidings of a new-found-out gloſs, to pervert, and rack, and torment Gods holy Word.*

Philal. Me-thinks this paſſage ſhould affect any good man. But, *Theophilus*, what ſhould induce ſo many to be led by a few Scriptures againſt ſuch a torrent of others, to cry up ſuch ſtrange Doctrine?

Theoph. You love to ask *me* Queſtions which you can anſwer as well your ſelf: You know they pretend that

that this is the onely way to advance Gods grace in mens converſion and ſalvation. And this, no doubt, is the onely motive that prevaileth with all the truly *good* men among them to go that way. It ſounds as harſh in many, at leaſt, of *their* ears, as it doth in *ours*; as I have great reaſon to be aſſured. And *Calvin* himſelf, in the 608 page of his *Inſtitutions*, calls Abſolute Reprobation *Horribile Decretum*: And the Preſident of the Synod at *Dort* ſaid it was *materia odioſa*; and therefore declared to the Remonſtrants that that Controverſie ſhould be waved, and ſaid that they would onely hear their Arguments againſt Abſolute Election, for that was *materia ſuavis*. As I finde in their Letters called *Epiſtolæ Eccleſiaſticæ, &c.* I ſay, it is very *harſh* doctrine to many of *them* as well as to *us*; but becauſe they cannot otherwiſe than by admitting it, magnifie, as they think they

XVII. *What is the Motive inducing the good men of that perſwaſion to go that way.*

Part II they ought, the divine grace to Gods elect, they force themſelvs to ſwallow the bitter Pill, as much as their ſtomacks nauſeate it; and therefore, as thoſe that drink down loathſome Potions ſtop their *noſes*, ſo do theſe their *ears* to the clamours of their own Reaſon againſt it; and will not ſedately advert to, but violently ſuppreſs the natural dictates of their underſtandings. Have you not ſeveral times obſerved that the good-natured people of that way complain more than others of Blaſphemous thoughts? I am ſure I have; and have found when I have diſcourſed with them, that this doctrine was the occaſion of them. So that whether they will or no, their Reaſon, or innate ſenſe of their Souls (call it which you pleaſe) ſuggeſts to them the dreadful conſequences of it, which they would fain believe to be the devils temptations.

Philal. But don't you believe, that

nate ſinners, as the Jews were in rejecting Chriſt and his bleſſed Goſpel. And inſtanceth in that of *Pharaoh*; Part II

V. 17. *For the Scripture ſaith unto Pharaoh, For this ſame purpoſe have I raiſed thee up, that I might ſhew my power in thee, and that my Name might be declared throughout all the earth.* i. e. *Pharaoh* having long hardened his own heart, notwithſtanding the ſeveral warnings he had by *Moſes*, and no fewer than ſix Judgements inflicted upon him; God at length ſaith concerning him, that he would harden his heart in his juſt judgement, *i. e.* do that which he would be farther hardened by: and addes, that he would preſently cut him off, but that he preſerved him, and raiſed him out of great dangers, for no other end, but to make him an example of his juſt indignation againſt obdurate and ſtubborn Rebels, in

Par. II the more ſignal and illuſtrious manner. That the word ἐξήγειρα, which is tranſlated [*I have raiſed thee up*] is to be underſtood as was now ſaid, is apparent, in that it ſignifieth to raiſe out of ſome low condition, and often from ſome diſeaſe or danger, as a very learned Critick hath obſerved. Particularly, *James* 5. 15. it is uſed to ſignifie raiſing out of a diſeaſe. And farther, this appears from the Hebrew word that is uſed *Exod.* 9. 16. which is the very place that is here cited by the Apoſtle: the word there is העמדתיך, and it ſignifieth *Stare feci*, *I have made thee ſtand.* The Vulgar Latine renders it, *Suſtentavi te*, *I have ſuſtained thee.* The Septuagint, διετηρήθης, *Thou wert kept*, or *kept alive.* It followeth,

V. 18. *Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.* i. e. From hence I conclude, that God may

may without the leaſt injuſtice, have mercy at his pleaſure, on ſome wicked perſons that have deſerved the contrary; and harden others. Par. II.

By Gods hardening in Scripture, we are not to underſtand any poſitive action of his, whereby he putteth wickedneſs into men, or intends and increaſeth that which is already in them; for then would he be the author of ſin; which to aſſert is the higheſt blaſphemy. Neither have we any cauſe to believe that it is to be underſtood of Gods withdrawing all manner of neceſſary helps whereby ſinners may be mollified. For the Signes that were wrought upon *Pharaoh*, were in themſelvs very proper to ſoften him; and moſt of them, while they continued, had that effect: but Gods ſtill removing of them, ſeems to be the great cauſe of his induration; as among others is obſerved by *Origen*. And I remember he ſaith, that it is uſual for fa- XXXI. *How God is ſaid to harden ſinners.*

Par. II fathers to ſpeak after this manner to their diſobedient children : *'Tis I have hardened you, 'tis I that have made a Rogue of you : for had not I been ſo indulgent towards you, you would not behave your ſelf as you do towards me.* So that by Gods hardning, we are to underſtand no more than his doing ſuch things to wicked men, which are not in their own nature, but accidentally, through their wickedneſs, the occaſion of their farther hardening. And ſo, and no otherwiſe, did he harden the Jews ; nay, *chiefly* were they hardened by the divine *forbearance* to puniſh them for their rebellion and unbelief ; by which means moſt of them came to be, through their own naughtineſs, more and more obſtinate ; and ſo rendred themſelvs the more fit objects of that vengeance that forty years after our Saviours death, according to his prediction, brake forth upon them. That notwith-

withſtanding this induration, each particular perſon of them was not in an abſolutely hopeleſs condition as to their eternal ſtate, appeareth in that many of them were converted to the faith by the Apoſtles preaching; though it is certain, that the rejection of them, conſidered as a *Nation*, was inevitable; and the decree concerning their being deprived of thoſe priviledges, whereby they were for a long time diſtinguiſhed from other people, irreverſible. In the next words a reply of the perverſe Jews is brought in, to what the Apoſtle had ſaid to them in thoſe foregoing; which, 'tis like, they had ſometime made upon the like occaſion. Part II

V. 19. *Thou wilt ſay then unto me, Why doth he yet finde fault? for who hath reſiſted his will?* i.e. Why doth he ſtill accuſe us for, and upbraid us with not believing in your Jeſus; when he hath (as it ſeemeth

Part II from what thou haſt ſaid) hardened us, and is reſolved to reject us? for his counſel ſhall ſtand; who hath ever reſiſted his decree? though we ſhould now believe the Goſpel, it will be to no purpoſe. Nay, now he would not have us believe it, that his decree concerning us may take effect. To this he anſwers,

V. 20. *Nay but, O man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God? ſhall the thing formed ſay unto him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me thus?* i. e. Nay but, O man, who art thou, that thou dareſt tax the wiſdom of God, upon the account of his ſo doing, as if he could do fooliſhly? (And as for his dealing in ſuch a manner with you, as that you become by that means more hardned, and averſe to obey his Goſpel; you may thank your ſelvs for it, and therefore have no cauſe to object againſt Gods *juſtice* neither: and beſides, 'tis onely long of your own

own wickedneſs that you become more hardned by any of his providences). For you therefore to talk after this rate, is as arrogant, as if the thing formed ſhould ſay to him that formed it, Why haſt thou made me after this faſhion? Par. II

V. 21. *Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the ſame lump to make one veſſel to honour, and another to diſhonour?* i. e. If you think that God hath dealt unjuſtly with you, I pray anſwer me this Queſtion: Hath not the Potter power over his clay, to make of it what veſſel he thinks good? And when a piece thereof is marred upon the wheel, to make a meaner veſſel of it than otherwiſe it might have been? and ſhall not your Creator have as much power to deal with you as he pleaſeth, and (if he thinks good) to harden ſome of you, when he converts others; ſeeing you have rendered your ſelvs as liable to his

Part II wrath, as is the clay to the Potters pleasure? By *Jeremiah* 18.4.5.6, and the following verses, will this Exposition be made very plain and clear: to which place the Apostle, in these words, doth very probably allude; and you will by those verses understand, that the onely use God himself makes of this similitude, is the very same with that which you now heard. Then he goes on thus:

V. 22.23 *What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured* (or *will endure*; here being, 'tis like, an Analage of the Tense) *with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that he might* (or *that it may please him to*) *make known the riches of his glory, on the vessels of mercy which he hath before prepared unto glory?* i. e. What if God doth not presently punish you according to your desert, but goeth

goeth on for ſome time to bear with you, and, while he doth ſo, findes fault with you for your unbelief? What if he doth not immediately deſtroy thoſe that have long provoked him to it, and by their continued Rebellions made themſelves moſt worthy and fit objects of his wrath; but is pleaſed ſtill, with great gentleneſs and patience, to bear with them (as he did with *Pharaoh*) to chide and threaten them (as he alſo did him) that ſo he may the more ſeverely proceed againſt thoſe, that ſhall be more hardned by his forbearance, and continue refractory notwithſtanding his threats, and puniſh them in the more exemplary manner, (as he did that wicked King) I pray what ſhew of injuſtice is in this? But much leſs can God be taxed with unrighteouſneſs in having mercy on ſome as ill-deſerving Jews, and even wicked Gentiles

Part II

tiles (see the next verse) by preparing them by a true and effectual faith in Christ for eternal blessedness, to demonstrate, in the most signal manner, the riches of his grace and goodness.

Observe, that *the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, are such as the Apostle saith God *endured with much long-suffering*; and therefore they were not made so by any absolute Decree of his, but made themselvs so by their wilful and free sinning: For what *long-suffering* can it be, to bear with the sins of those that could never have possibly been avoided?

Philal. That verse alone is enough to warrant the truth of the Paraphrase you have given of those foregoing, at least as to the substance of it.

Theoph. But, *Philalethes*, those that would have the Apostle to designe in those verses the proving of the

the doctrine of Abſolute Reproba- Par. II
tion, and the juſtice of it; how beſides the purpoſe do they make him in this verſe to conclude that diſcourſe?

Philal. It would have been a thouſand times more pertinent to ſuch a deſigne, for him thus to ſay: *What if God willing to declare his* Soveraignty, *was pleaſed from Eternity to determine concerning you, that you ſhould be unavoidably damned, and to make you for that very end, notwithſtanding all the means of grace he hath afforded to you; which of you dares therefore to ſay or think that he is too hardly dealt with, or can complain upon that account?*

Theoph. Ay well ſaid, this would be to the purpoſe with a witneſs: but thanks be to God, there's no ſuch talk as this in all the Bible.

Philal.

Part II

XXXII. Philalethes *offereth another interpretation of the 19 & 20 verses.*

Philal. But give me leave to offer to you another interpretation of the 19 and 20 verses: *Why doth he yet finde fault, for who hath resisted his will?* i. e. Why doth he *now* finde fault, (*In* may be so rendered, for it signifieth *jam* as well as *adhuc*) for who hath disobeyed his Law? Why is he so angry with us, and resolved so severely to punish us? for we are so far from refusing obedience to his Law, that it is onely our zeal for that, which makes us reject your Christian Religion.

Then saith the Apostle, *Nay but, O man, who art thou that replyest against God? Shall the thing formed?* &c. i. e. You may be ashamed of that sawcie and profane answer: for may not God your Creator impose what Laws he pleaseth on you? is he bound never to abrogate the Law given by *Moses* to you,

you, and to require your obedience to no other? And then it followeth, *Hath not the potter power over the clay* ? &c. And therefore why may not God, for your obstinate disobedience to his Son Jesus, as zealous as you are for the Law of *Moses*, of a glorious Nation dignified with extraordinary priviledges, make a base and contemptible people of you; and continuing in unbelief, make your condition far worse too in the other world; as well as the Potter, when he findes a piece of clay untractable, so that it will not be made a fine vessel, doth make a courser, and one for a mean use, of it?

Theoph. This Exposition of yours is ingenious, and for ought I know the truest; if either there can be found a good connexion between the 22 verse, and those so interpreted; or the 22 verse be related not so

Par. II. so much to these, as to the 18 verse.

Philal. But whatsoever meaning the Apostle had in some verses of this Chapter, the oftener I read it, the more am I convinced, that there is not a syllable of any such Doctrine as that you have been disproving to be found there: and that he saith nothing to prove either *Esau* or his posterity to be put into a desperate condition, by Gods decrees, concerning their eternal state; but onely that the seed of *Jacob* were distinguished from that of *Esau* by the enjoyment of far greater priviledges in this world. Nor that he asserts any other Reprobation of the Jews, than that which their wilful rejection of the Messiah, and his Gospel, was the cause of.

Theoph. No, nor yet, as I said, doth the Apostle say, that they were

were in a hopeleſs condition as to their eternal ſalvation, notwithſtanding their unbelief; but onely that upon this account God had paſſed an irreverſible Decree for the rejection of them conſidered as a *Nation.* For the *converſion* of any particular perſons among them, is not aſſerted to be abſolutely impoſſible; but all that may be proved from any of his words is, that Gods purpoſe to caſt them off ſo far as that they ſhould be no more a diſtinct *Nation* or Body Politick, was unchangeable. Par. II

Philal. I have been often told that the moſt ancient Fathers were not ſo Eagle-eyed as to eſpie that doctrine either in this Chapter, nor yet elſewhere.

Theoph. Several, nay *moſt* of them, moſt plainly, I aſſure you, contradict it in their Writings in the plaineſt expreſſions; as I am pre-

Part II

XXXIII. *That the most ancient Fathers were enemies to absolute Reprobation, with its concomitants.*

prepared to shew you at large, whensoever you shall please to desire me. And this is so true, that you know they are suspected by many of that Doctrine which was since their days called *Pelagianism*, though without sufficient ground; if at least the *Pelagian* Doctrine were what it is now commonly represented to be; but it is not certainly known what it was.

Philal. This alone is *almost* a *demonstration* to me, that the Apostles never preacht this Doctrine: For those Fathers living so near their days, 'tis not easily conceivable how they should so unanimously concur in mistaking their sence, *they* being in far better circumstances to understand it, than *we* that are at such a distance from them.

Theoph.

that the men of this opinion are also induced to it, because they are not able to interpret in any other sence those places of Scripture that seem to make for it? Par. II

Theoph. I do not think that the *Learned* men are: For I cannot imagine that those should think, that such Scriptures are unintelligible in any other sence than that they understand them in, that know how *few*, and therefore how *ambiguous* the original words of the Hebrew Tongue are, as also that there are different sences of the same Verb in several Conjugations; and that there are strange Idioms and Proprieties of speech in that Language, which are also imitated in the Greek Testament; and lastly, that the occasions of several passages do frequently make another sence necessary to be imposed on them, from that which at first sight, and considering them simply and absolutely,

Part II and as entire propoſitions, without relation to any other thing, offereth it ſelf.

Philal. I have ſometimes thought, that thoſe need never deſpair of underſtanding the places they produce to ſerve their *Hypotheſes*, in a different ſence from that they are ſo fond of, who can invent a Figure to make *All* men, nay and *every* man too, to ſignifie but ſome few; and can reconcile *I will not the death of a ſinner*, with *I deſire the death of moſt ſinners*; and, *He will have all men to be SAVED*, with *He will have the generality of men to be DAMNED*; and many the like Propoſitions which ſound in *my* ears as contradictory one to the other, as any I have ever heard or can invent. So that, *Theophilus*, it muſt needs be, as you ſaid, their deſire to magnifie Gods grace to the Elect, that alone prevaileth with thoſe of them that are good-natured & truly-pious people

to

to go that way. But yet I wonder that they ſhould no more conſider, that, to magnifie Gods grace to ſome few, ſo as to deny it to all others; and ſo to advance his *mercy*, as to rob him of his *holineſs*, *truth* and *juſtice*, is to take ten thouſand times more from him, than is given thereby to him. Par. II

Theoph. I would advance Gods grace as highly as ever I am able, (and ſo I perſwade my ſelf would the Divines we have been ſpeaking of) ſo as not to deſtroy his other perfections: nor do *I* (nor I believe *they*) deſire to attribute any more to man, in the buſineſs of his ſalvation, than needs muſt, and not ſuppoſe him a perfect Brute. But to ſay the truth, I, and thoſe I am acquainted with of thoſe Divines, do magnifie in all reſpects the grace of God, as much as any of the other Way; and in one reſpect incomparably more.

Par. II

Philal. What is the way you take ſo to do?

XVIII. *Thoſe Divines middle way betwixt the Calviniſts and Remonſtrants.*

Theoph. A middle one betwixt the *Calviniſts* and *Remonſtrants*; which, in ſhort, is this: That there is ſuch a thing as diſtinguiſhing grace, whereby ſome perſons are abſolutely elected, by vertue whereof they ſhall be (having potent and infallible means prepared for them) irreſiſtibly ſaved. But that others, that are not in the number of thoſe ſingular and ſpecial favourites, are not at all in a deſperate condition, but have ſufficient means appointed for them to qualifie them for greater or leſs degrees of happineſs, and have ſufficient grace offered to them ſome way or other, and ſome time or other; and are in a capacity of ſalvation either greater or leſs through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt; and that none of them are damned but thoſe that wilfully refuſe to co-operate with that grace of God, and will not act

act in some moral suitableness to that power they have received. And as for those that have been in an extraordinary manner wrought upon, and finde themselvs very powerfully excited and carried to that which is good; such at least have reason, so long as they are also careful to walk in all ways of holiness, to believe themselvs in the number of the Absolutely elected. *Now* (as a learned Divine saith) *the Arminian need not repine at this way, nor yet the Calvinist: for whatsoever good Arminianism pretends to concerning all men, is exhibited to the part not absolutely elected; and to the other part, the goodness of God is greater than is allotted by* Arminius: *And whatsoever good is pretended in Calvinism to that part that is absolutely elected, the same goodness is here exhibited; and besides, that direful vizard pulled off, that Ignorance and Melancholy had put upon divine* Par. II

Par. II. *providence, and the lovely face of the Goſpel.*

Philal. I am glad to underſtand that you and they have made choice of this way; which is not new to me, (no more than another Middle way, which I cannot be ſatisfied with) but for ſome time I have been greatly inclined to prefer this before any other, as having by much the feweſt and leaſt difficulties.

Theoph. I did not think you a ſtranger to it, and believed you could not but like well of it; nor can I conceive why either any *Calviniſt* or *Remonſtrant* ſhould miſlike it. But that we ſee in all profeſſions there are thoſe that will hardly be brought to allow that there may be any farther improvements made, than thoſe which their great Maſters had attained to. Though both *Calvin* and *Arminius* were excellently-learned and pious perſons, yet methinks their reſpective greateſt Admirers

mirers ſhould acknowledge each of them ſhort of infallibility, and therefore not preſume them in any thing attained to a *Nè plus ultra*. Every Age, ſure enough, improveth in knowledge, having the help ſtill of thoſe foregoing: and as this is ſeen in other Sciences, ſo eſpecially is it diſcernible in that of Divinity; as all but ignorant, and extremely prejudiced perſons muſt needs acknowledge. Part II

Philal. But this way is not ſo new as ſome have imagined it: for I have read it in the Hiſtory of the Council of *Trent*, as that which *Catharinus*, a Moderate and Learned man, propoſed there for the accommodation of the difference between the *Dominicans* and *Franciſcans* about this point. XIX. *This way propoſed by* Catharinus *at the Council of* Trent.

Theoph. The ſame perſon (as I am informed by one that hath read it) hath alſo written a very ingenious Piece upon that ſubject, wherein

Par. II

he layeth down, and defendeth very handſomely this very way.

Philal. But indeed, if I did not think that this way were as much elder than that Gentleman, as were our Saviour and his Apoſtles, I ſhould not have, at all, given credit to it.

XX. *How it came to paſs that this way for ſome Ages had fewest friends.*

Theoph. No, nor I hope any elſe, if they did not think ſo: *Id verum quod antiquiſſimum*, being in Divinity an indiſputable Maxime. And I verily believe that this way is much more befriended by the great Standard of Truth, the Scriptures, than any other. But how it ſhould, if true, have for ſome Ages the *fewest*, if *any* Friends, is no wonder: For *Truth* is too *frequently*, if not *always* loſt in a Scuffle, and forced to give place to extremes by eager conteſts. And indeed this is too moderate and yeelding a way to have ſo much as entered into the thoughts of the Hot men of either party;

party; who like nothing so well as to keep themselvs at the greatest distance from each other. And there is great cause to suspect, that in most *other* Controversies that have been managed with that fierceness that this hath been, the several contesting parties have over-done, and outshot the mark: and that *Truth* will one day be found to have been on neither side, but to have layn unobserved between the Combatants, though nearer to some than others. Part II

Philal. 'Tis not unlikely.

XXI. *This way a great ease to* Theophilus *his mind.*

Theoph. This way, I must tell you, *Philalethes*, hath, for divers years, been a mighty ease to my minde: And I will communicate to you something concerning my self, that I never, before now, had occasin to tell you. The Doctrine of Absolute Reprobation did ever since I was of years of discretion lie very unevenly and ruggedly in my brains; and seemed extremely harsh to me.

And

Part II And though I for ſome time thought that I was bound to believe it; yet could I not endure much to *think*, or to hear others *talk* of it. But after I betook my ſelf to ſtudie the Controverſie, I had ſo quick a ſenſe of the natural conſequences of it, as did greatly diſtract me: For I was fearful of letting go the Premiſe, as much as the Concluſions ſcar'd me. But while I *thought*, or rather *feared* that the Doctrine was too too true; I was frequently diſquieted with blaſphemous thoughts, and moſt black apprehenſions of the lovelieſt of Beings; nor could I think of God many times without conſternation. Thoſe thoughts I was ready to look upon as injections from *his* and *Mankindes* enemy: Till at length, after I had weighed things more impartially, (having read a Book or two that prepared me with ſome free Principles) I found that I had wrong'd the Devil, and that my affright-

affrighting thoughts were the too natural off-ſpring of that Principle: And came to be convinced that till I let go this, I was not like to be rid of them. But then I was as much to ſeek where to fix, and how to ſteer my ſelf, as to the doctrine of Election; (for very fearful I was to entertain any opinion that might at all leſſen Gods grace to any) whereupon for a while I was well pleaſed with that Middle way you now gave an intimation of; till after better weighing it, I found but very little, if any thing, gotten by it. Then I fell to conſidering that other I have given you an account of, and have ever ſince been as well *ſatisfied* with *this*, as I was with *that diſſatisfied*. And ſo I took my leave of the forementioned Principle, and was thereupon, I thank God, well rid of its troubleſome attendants. For ſome time I could not be perſwaded that thoſe ſad conſequences were

Part II were ſo faſt tyed to that opinion, but that they might be looſed from each other: whereupon I ſet my very *teeth* to the knot, and tryed all my skill to undo it; but when I found that it was labour in vain, I was, as I ſaid, chiefly encouraged by the acquaintance I took with *this* way, to ſend both Principle and Concluſions packing together; and ſo bade them all *Goodnight*.

XXII. Philalethes *no leſs beholden to it; which cauſeth* Theophilus *to ask him ſome queſtions.*

Philal. I am no leſs beholden to it than you are; nor do I think that *any* ones minde hath been more relieved by it, than *mine* hath.

Theoph. And have you not found, *Philalethes*, that ſince you exchanged the *Calviniſtical* for *this* way, you love God better than before, and can think of him with more delight and pleaſure?

Philal. Yes, I thank God; And whereas before I loved him chiefly from ſome hopes I had that he loved me; I can now love him for himſelf, and

and the consideration of the amiableness of his nature, and essential perfections: And therefore my affection to him is more constant, than it was while it chiefly depended upon the apprehension I had of his affecting me. Part II

Theoph. So it must, I should think, needs be; although you still loved *him* onely in regard of his love to *you*: For though you may sometimes, possibly, be without any great sense of his love of *complacence*, yet I dare say you now never want that of his love of *benevolence*.

Philal. No never.

Theoph. You have also a clearer sense of the goodness of the divine precepts, and of the hatefulness and vileness of sin, han't you?

Philal. Yes, a much clearer; which I hope hath some good influence upon my life.

Theoph. So your *love* alone must needs have; but much more *that*

and

Part II and *this* together.

Philal. But, *Theophilus*, what a Catechiſt are you grown all of a ſuddain? *I* pray deſiſt from putting any more Queſtions of this nature. Did *I* not ſo well know you, *I* ſhould have done but fooliſhly in thus freely anſwering thoſe you have ask'd me: And had *I* of mine own accord told you, what you have now heard, you your ſelf would have accounted me too guilty of boaſting and vain-glory. But yet though (thanks be to Gods grace) I am ſomewhat better than *I* have been; yet am *I* ſtill ſenſible of ſo much weakneſs, of ſuch great diſcompoſure of thoughts, and diſorderlineſs of affections, as may well keep me exceedingly low in mine own eyes, and Antidote me from pride and conceitedneſs in regard of my attainments, (were they greater than they are) even though *I* ſhould onely be beholden to my

own

own ſtrength for them. But ſeeing you are ſo good at Catechizing, why may not *I* be ſo alſo? Par. II

Theoph. So you have been, I think, *ſufficiently*, ſince the beginning of this diſcourſe.

Philal. But why may not I repeat to *you* your own Queſtions?

Theoph. But you have time little enough, at preſent, for other matters: don't you ſee? the Sun grows low.

Philal. Well then, to purſue more cloſely the buſineſs in hand: Do not our Adverſaries in this point accuſe thoſe Friends of ours of *Arminianiſm* in aſſerting *Free-will*, notwithſtanding that their Middle way? XXIII. *Of Free-will.*

Theoph. This way teacheth us to aſſert no *Free-will* that is oppoſite to *Free-grace*: And onely thus much, that men are inveſted by God with ability to do much in order to ſalvation; as, to abſtain from the

Part II the external acts of ſin, to hear his Word, read it and conſider it, and to *endeavour* to ſubdue all their luſts, and perform whatſoever duties are required of them, *&c.* And likewiſe by the infinitely-ſtrong motives contained in the Goſpel, by the motions of his holy Spirit, various providences, or in one word, by his preventing grace, may they *will* ſo to do. But that we can, of our ſelvs, turn our own wills from the ways of ſin to the ways of God, is peremptorily denyed by us; and, for ought that I can learn, by the *Remonſtrants* themſelvs alſo; as much as they are accuſed by ſome for ſo aſſerting.

Philal. But don't we ſee that the generality of men that enjoy the means of grace are never the better for them, but continue in wilful diſobedience?

Theoph. 'Tis too true, and matter of ſaddeſt lamentation: but what

what of that? Let us, in Gods name, charge it wholly upon themſelvs; and not ſay, they are not able to do otherwiſe: if this were ſo, I ſhould think it the greateſt folly in the world to be angry with a wicked man. Don't we ſee that the threatning of an *eaſie* puniſhment, or the promiſe of a *ſmall* reward, will make men finde a *will* to abſtain from ſeveral ſins, which they would not be kept from by all the threatnings and promiſes in the Book of God? Therefore, ſurely, by the help of theſe, (and eſpecially if we take the other helps along with them, that were but now named) they may *will* not onely to *keep* from ſome ſins, but alſo to *endeavour* to keep from all. Mens Wills being ſo ſeldom wrought upon, doth not prove that they have no power to will thus to do: For we ſee that it is the very ſame thing as to all other habits, as well as ſinful ones: there is not Part II

Part II one among *many*, ſcarcely, that will be broken of ſuch Cuſtoms as are in themſelvs very *innocent*, no, though they finde them prejudicial to them; as I need not give you inſtances. But then for ſo few mens being throughly converted by the means of grace, let us much leſs run to Gods abſolute decreeing their non-converſion or damnation to give a Solution of it. Nor let us ſo wrong God, as to ſay that it is any way long of him, or that he hath been wanting to them; and by this means excuſe them. What reaſon have we to imagine that they are not *themſelvs* in all the fault? and that God would not have given them ſuch a meaſure of grace, as would have effectually converted them, had they but acted in ſome ſutableneſs to the power he hath given them? Had they but done what they *could*, and might have *willed* to have done too, but that they *freely* choſe the contrary;

trary; And againſt the checks of their own Conſciences, and all the methods of Gods grace, with a *free*, not *fatal* willingneſs, preferred the pleaſing of their ſenſes before the ſalvation of their ſouls. God hath ſaid enough to perſwade us not to imagine this; as may be largely ſhewn. Par. II

Philal. I could never hear the moſt wicked wretch, when he is wiſeſt, and moſt himſelf, (I mean when on his death-bed, or under ſome ſmart affliction) either complain of God, or curſe *Adam* for his neglect of the means of grace, and unmindfulneſs of his precious ſoul: And thoſe of them whoſe conſciences are awakened do ever lay the blame on *themſelvs* principally, of their careleſneſs and diſobedience: And not at all, I ſay, either on their Creator or firſt parents; as if by the one or the other they were brought into ſo ſad a condition, as

Part II

to be under an impoſſibility of ſo much as *willing* to do otherwiſe. But *then* they are heard to *befool themſelvs* exceedingly, and to make God a many fair promiſes how good they will be, if he'll but pleaſe to prolong their lives, or remove their afflictions: which is a plain Argument, that (whatſoever ſpecious ſhews of Reaſon any of them might once have pleaſed themſelvs with, for their being under a neceſſity of behaving themſelvs as they did) their own experience, and inward ſenſe of their ſouls undoubtedly aſſures them, now that they have leiſure ſedately to conſult them, that they are much freer creatures than they were once willing to fancy themſelvs to be.

Theoph. That one Argument would ſatisfie me, more than the moſt *plauſible* ones I ever met with of the other ſide.

Philal. But we ſee, *Theophilus*, whi-

whither too many of *thoſe* are carried, that deny all freedom of will in unregenerate men, as to that which is good: for, I think I may ſay, that even *all* thoſe that beſt underſtand themſelvs in that way, do alſo oppoſe this Liberty as to all the actions of all men: wherein they are not a little beholden to Mr. *Hobbs*, as hard an opinion as too deſervedly they have of him. Part II

Theoph. But the Philoſophical ſubtilties whereby that Gentleman and his Brethren in this point, have defended that opinion, may be abundantly confuted by the contrary and confeſſed ſenſe of almoſt all Mankinde, and by the knowledge we have of our own ſouls. For we are able at any time to make an experiment to our ſelvs, that there is an αὐτοκίνησις or ſelf-moving principle in our Wills, and that they are not blinde powers neceſſarily following the dictates of our Underſtandings;

Part II (the Will being doubtleſs no really-diſtinct faculty from the Underſtanding, nor from the *Soul* neither; but the Soul it ſelf, as it ſimply *underſtands* or *apprehends* an object under the notion of true or good, or as by comparing one with another it *judgeth* of them, is called the *Underſtanding*; and as it *putteth* it ſelf forward towards the doing or having any thing, or *refuſeth* ſo to do, it is called the *Will*). For we finde that we are able to will to do what we know ought not to be done, and to omit what we are aſſured we ought to do: I ſay, we finde this by ſad experience; and therefore when we do thus, our Wills contradict and diſobey the dictates of our Underſtandings. And if this were not ſo, (let thoſe men ſay what they can) there could be no ſuch thing as a ſin againſt Conſcience.

Philal. Our own Feeling and Senſation is a thouſand times more cou-

convincing than any Argument can possibly be that is onely founded in Speculation. Par. II

Theoph. Yes verily. But whereas I said, that this strange opinion is against the sense of *almost* all Mankinde; I think I spake too modestly, and might have spared that [*almost*]. For I cannot imagine that those men themselvs, that are the greatest Zealots for the Doctrine of mens Wills being under a fatal necessity, either by the means of Gods Decrees, or upon any other account; (I say, I cannot imagine that) they really believe it themselvs, except in some certain Fits; as confidently as they may talk or write (I will not say to shew their parts, but) to manage a disputation. For they will as much befool and vex at themselvs when they are sensible they have done amiss, as other folk. But how a mans Conscience, or the reflecting of his practical Understanding upon his acti-

Par. II. ons ſhould trouble him, ſo as to make him condemn himſelf; I cannot by any means underſtand, if he be not at the ſame time conſcious to himſelf, that he might have done otherwiſe.

Philal. None are more angry with *others* neither, than *they* uſe to be, and that not onely upon the account of actions, but alſo of opinions: there are none in the world more impatient towards thoſe that are not of their minde than I perceive the violent men of that way are: Nay, they will be ready to call you *Heretick* if you don't think as they do in *Philoſophy*, as well as in *Divinity*.

Theoph. But there is nothing in the world more certain, than that if all mens actions and opinions be the neceſſary reſult of an irreſiſtible Fate, they may onely pitie Naughty men, and poor Hereticks; it would be the moſt unaccountable folly to be

be angry with them. And though they are never ſo willingly ſo, this can make them the objects of onely ſo much the greater pitie; ſeeing, according to their doctrine, they cannot but will ſo to be. And he therefore that ſhall ſtorm againſt you and me, for talking againſt this Doctrine, will in ſo doing take our parts, and declare himſelf to be of our minde. Part II

XXIV. *Of the ſtate of the Heathens.*

Philal. But we have all this while, *Theophilus*, been diſcourſing onely of ſuch as enjoy the means of grace; but what ſay you to the Heathens, that never heard of Chriſt, or ſaw one letter of the Bible? Are not they under a fatal neceſſity of being damned? And is not God wanting to them, think you?

Theoph. To ſay the truth, many of them, for all their not having heard of Chriſt, and their being ſtrangers to the Bible, have out-done moſt *Chriſtians*, to our great ſhame be

Par. II be it ſpoken. But, I ſay, that God is not nor hath not been wanting to them neither, as to the enabling them to do ſo much, as he expects from them; and ſo making them capable of ſome lower degrees of happineſs. Hath not our Saviour told us, that *where little is given, but little ſhall be required?* And I have heard of a meer Natural Fool, that on his death-bed ſaid, *Lord, where thou giveſt but little, thou doſt not expect much.* God hath given the meaneſt of them a ſenſe of good and evil in divers inſtances, and that he is willing to aſſiſt them with his grace to live accordingly; as alſo that he ſometimes excites their Wills, who dares deny? Hath not S. *Paul* told us, that they are *without excuſe*, or *rendered inexcuſable*? but how can they be ſo, if they are denyed what is, at leaſt, ſo far neceſſary as was now ſaid? But, *Philalethes*, we need not trouble our

our ſelvs about them ; we ſhall, no queſtion, at the great day (if we can but have patience to wait till then) clearly underſtand the infinite juſtice of God Almighty's proceedings with them ; and that thoſe of them, that ſhall then have the ſentence of condemnation paſt upon them, will accuſe themſelvs moſtly, and not at all their Maker for it. For my part, I will not ſay that they are any of them ſaved ; but I would not for a world, neither, pronounce them all damned. I know that *there is no name under heaven whereby men can be ſaved, but onely the name of Jeſus Chriſt* ; but I am nowhere told, that thoſe which never heard of him cannot be ſaved by him, without faith in him. If this be ſo, what becomes of poor Infants ? nay, of all thoſe, except a Prophet or two, that lived before the coming of our Saviour ? He ſhall be my great *Apollo*, that can give

Par. II

Part II give me ſufficient reaſon to believe, that any under the Law, except ſome few extraordinary perſons, had faith in Chriſts death for the remiſſion of their ſins; whenas his own Diſciples had not, till after his Reſurrection: but yet eleven of them will be acknowledged to have been good men before his death. Nay, it is evident, that till after his Reſurrection, they retained too groſs a notion of the Meſſiah. So that, I ſay, if any of the Heathens be ſaved (which if they are not, it will be their own faults) it may be time enough to underſtand their obligation to Chriſt for it, when they are come into the other world. But why ſhould we *Chriſtians* be leſs charitable toward them, than were the very Jews? who admitted thoſe that obſerved the ſeven Precepts of *Noah*, and worſhipt the true God, (who were called *Proſelytes of the gate*) to the hope of eternal life. And

And the saying of *Trypho* the Jew to *Justin Martyr* is very observable. *If thou hadst continued a Heathen Philosopher*, said he, *and lived unblamably, there would have been hope of thee: but seeing thou leavest God, to believe in a Man, what hope can there be of thy salvation?* Par. II

So that if I were bound to give my sense of the honestest of the Heathens, I would chuse to judge on the right hand: but we have nothing to do with them; nor can any Argument drawn from the consideration of their circumstances, establish the doctrine against which we have so freely expressed our selvs.

Philal. From that little you have said of them, it plainly enough appeareth. But besides, there are some, you know, that are of opinion that those who have been in the worst circumstances in this state, and enjoyed the least means, may continue in a state of probation for some

Part II

some time betwixt their departure hence and the day of Judgement, and have better means then afforded them.

Theoph. Whether that will be so or no, God onely knows: But *this*, me-thinks, should be by all granted, that the infinitely-wise God hath ways enough, though never so much unknown to us, to clear his Justice and Goodness, in his dealing with the whole world; though the Doctrine some are so fond of, and we no less dislike, should have no truth in it: And that he may have most wise holy and good ends in those dispensations that seem most harsh to us; which we cannot so much as dream of. Nor is it fit for us to desire that unsearchable wisdom it self should make us acquainted with the reasons of all his actings; or level his Providences with our most shallow capacities, and gratifie our licourish curi-

XXV. *That God hath ways, though they may be perfectly unknown to us, to clear the justice & goodness of his dealings with all mankind.*

curiosity in all our enquiries. We may well be abundantly satisfied with this, That God is perfectly holy, wise, and good; and that he cannot do any thing disbecoming or unworthy of those attributes. And therefore as desirous as I am to defend, according to my weak ability, what the Almighty hath declared concerning himself in the plainest manner that words can express, from the attempts of those, that I think in my conscience do take a course (as well as they may mean) to render it insignificant, and to vindicate him from those notions that most evidently tend to eclipse those perfections which he most desireth to be known by: yet I altogether dislike prying into those matters that he hath kept secret, and affecting to be wise above what is written. Part II

Philal. If all men were of that minde, the Controversie in hand would be soon ended. But, *Theophilus*,

Par. II

philus, there are thoſe that ſay, that what we are forced to acknowledge to defend our Middle way, tendeth to encourage men in Security, and to defer the great work of Repentance to the very laſt: For that it from thence followeth, that it is in mens power, when they pleaſe to have a minde to it, to put themſelvs into the number of Gods faithful and elect people.

XXVI. *Whether what muſt be acknowledged, to defend that middle way, tends to encourage ſecurity, &c.*

Theoph. We moſt heartily abominate that conſequence; nor can any doctrine of ours be at all charged with it. For we ſay that men may ſin away their day of grace, even before that of their lives be expired. And by their often grieving Gods holy Spirit, and quenching his bleſſed motions, they may cauſe him quite to leave them, and give them over to the hardneſs of their own hearts. And let me ſpeak to the man, that is hereby inclined to be more ſecure, in the words of the

the excellent perſon, a paſſage in whoſe Sermon I before quoted, and which preſently follow it. *Thou wretched Fool! dareſt thou make an advantage of Gods goodneſs to aſſiſt and patronize thy ſecurity? Hath he promiſed to give thee Repentance, whenſoever thou pleaſeſt to allow thy ſelf leiſure to ſeek it? No, know, there is a time, (and preſuming ſecurity doth haſten and add wings to that time) when there ſhall be found no place for Repentance,* &c. Par II

Philal. I wiſh you could as eaſily vindicate the contrary doctrine from tending to make men ſecure and careleſs.

Theoph. I wiſh I could, but for my *life* I cannot: And I am ſure it doth a world of miſchief. Many whom I hope are good people would be better, I verily think, were it not for that doctrine: But I am certain that multitudes of wicked wretches

XXVII. *That the Doctrine diſcourſed againſt doth a world of miſchief,*

Part II are greatly hardened in their ſins by it; and will not endure to be told that it is not true, that they may not be deprived of the main prop of their ſecurity. They will fleer in the faces of their pious Miniſters, when they pathetically excite them to work out their own ſalvation; and flatter themſelvs with this, that whatere the Preacher is pleaſed to ſay, there is no neceſſity of any ſuch ſtrictneſs and diligence, or of any at all: for their fate is determined; and that though holineſs be neceſſary to happineſs, yet if they are abſolutely deſigned for happineſs, God will ſure enough, at one time or other make them holy; but if not, let them do what they can, he will not. And who can anſwer this? Were there no other miſchief attending the doctrine than this, it would make one conclude it falſe. And would it not vex one to the very ſoul, to be liable to be baffled by every ſorry Raſcal;

and

and that too in a buſineſs of infinitely the moſt weighty importance? Part II

Philal. I ſee you have ſome hot bloud in you, and can for a need be very heartily angry. One would think all the veins in your body to have emptied themſelvs into your face.

Theoph. Say you ſo? I muſt confeſs I can never think of this Miſchief, but I am apt to be much moved: and to ſay the truth, I give my ſelf leave to be angry upon ſuch accounts; I wiſh that no much ſlighter occaſions could ever make me ſo, and then of all my ſins, I ſhould leaſt bewail that of Paſſion. Well, *Philalethes*, I am ſure that our doctrine is a mighty incentive to holineſs, and the other a no leſs obſtacle; as many as there are whoſe true goodneſs doth antidote them againſt the poiſon of it. And this is the great Teſt and Standard, whereby I examine points of Controverſie; I conſider

Part II

XXVIII. *The Test by which* Theophilus *examines controverted points.*

which of the opposites tends most to the advancement of real holiness, (which I have more than once had occasion to tell you, is the great designe of the Christian Religion) and *that* I think my self bound to prefer, which I finde doth this: but that which apparently tends to make men careless in their prosecutions of it, I account my self obliged to reject as false, as great shews as it may have of probability. Nor is it any thing in the world, but the clear sense I have that this doctrine doth so, as also that it, with its unavoidable consequents, shamefully misrepresents our blessed Creator and Redeemer, that makes me oppose it, as I sometimes do, and conclude it to be erroneous.

Philal. But you likewise reject it because it contradicts (as was said) such an innumerable company of Scriptures?

Theoph. The forementioned considera-

siderations make me interpret *those few* Scriptures that seem to make for it, by *these many*; and not these many, by those few. Par. II

Philal. I believe this doctrine would quickly be exploded by all good men, if they could once be perswaded to think that the Ninth to the *Romans* is capable of another Exposition than that which is commonly given to it: For I know no other Scriptures urged for it, but may be answered with ease enough.

XXIX. *Of the great obscurity of S. Paul's style in many places; and the causes of it.*

Theoph. Though I will not say, that it is easie to give the true sense of every verse in that Chapter, any more than it is in many others of S. *Paul*'s Epistles, (whose style is often the most obscure I ever read, the connexions in many places being not to be found without extreme difficulty; which is occasioned, I think, chiefly by his many tacite Answers to Objections, and Questions made to him by those to whom he wrote,

Par. II which we are unacquainted with; as alſo having a very curt and ſhort way of expreſſing himſelf, (obſerving very much in the Greek Tongue the *Hebrew* way of ſpeaking) and beſides, making ſo many excurſions as he doth, and very long Parentheſes; upon which accounts, if not more, no Apoſtle hath been ſo miſunderſtood as he; and, if you obſerve it, you ſhall finde that they are S. *Paul's* Epiſtles out of which almoſt all our wilde opinions have principally had their original, through the ignorance of men, or what is worſe. The Apoſtle S. *Peter* obſerveth, that even in *his* days, (when they were much more eaſily intelligible than now they are) there were ſome things in them *hard to be underſtood, which thoſe that were unlearned and unſtable wreſted (as they did the other Scriptures alſo) to their own deſtruction).* I ſay therefore, though it may not be eaſie to give

give the true ſence of every verſe in that Ninth to the *Romans*; yet I count it far leſs difficult to vindicate it from patronizing Abſolute Reprobation, than to prove it doth ſo. Par. II

Philal. If it be not too great a trouble, I could wiſh that you would run it over with a brief Paraphraſe.

Theoph. That I need not do, nor above half that Chapter; there being but about ſo much of it that ſignifieth any thing towards the countenancing of that opinion: And ſo far I will comply with your deſire.

XXX. *A Paraphraſe upon ſeveral verſes in the Ninth to the* Romans.

The Apoſtle having in the five firſt verſes expreſſed his great ſorrow for his Country-men the Jews, in that by their killing the Meſſiah, and moſt obſtinate perſiſting in unbelief, they had provoked God to reſolve upon the caſting off and rejecting their Nation in general, that is, to put them into the ſame circumſtances with the reſt of the world, and in ſome reſpects into worſe, *viz.* to

Part II deprive them of their good land, and even to cause them to cease to be a Nation or Body Politick, but to be dispersed here and there up and down the world; and therefore necessarily deprived of the extraordinary advantages for their souls they had an enjoyment of, which are there summed up, together with not a few temporal ones; they having been a people owned by God above all other, and his most special Favourites: I say, having done this in the five first verses, it followeth

In the 6. *Not as though the Word of God had taken none effect; for they are not all Israel that are of Israel.*

In which words he answers an Objection they might make against the possibility of Gods rejecting them, *viz.* If this be so, how can the promise of God to *Abraham* concerning his seed be performed? And he replieth, *They are not all Israel that*

that are of Iſrael ; i. e. God hath reſerved to himſelf a liberty of determining at ſeveral times, according to his pleaſure, who ſhall be eſteemed that ſeed of *Abraham* to whom the promiſe belongeth, and therefore he may reſtrain it to thoſe that were never the ſeed of his loyns, but of his faith onely. And he ſheweth next that this liberty God did uſe immediately after the promiſe : for, ſaith he in Part II

V. 7. *Neither becauſe they are the ſeed of Abraham are they all children, but in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called :* i.e. Thoſe which came from *Abrahams* loyns were not *all* accounted thoſe ſons of *Abraham* that ſhould have a ſhare in the promiſe, but *thoſe* onely which he ſhould have by *Iſaac*. And he ſaith in

V. 8. *That is, they which are the children of the* fleſh, *theſe are not the children of God, but the children of the* promiſe *are accounted for the ſeed.*

Part II *ſeed.* i.e. They that deſcended from *Abraham* by carnal generation were not all heirs of the promiſed Bleſſing; but onely thoſe children he had by vertue of the promiſe were accounted for the ſeed that ſhould ſo be. Then it followeth,

V. 9. *For this is the word of promiſe, At this time will I come, and Sarah ſhall have a ſon.* i.e. The birth of *Iſaac* was a ſpecial effect of Gods promiſe; he being miraculouſly born of a naturally-barren woman, and according to the ordinary courſe of nature paſt childbearing, had ſhe been never ſo fruitful; and his father being a very old man. Then ſaith he,

V. 10, 11, 12. *And not onely this, but when Rebecca alſo had conceived by one, even by our father Iſaac (for the children being yet unborn, nor having done good or evil, that the purpoſe of God according to election might ſtand not of works, but of him that calleth) it was ſaid unto her,*

The

The elder ſhall ſerve the younger. i.e. Par. II
Neither did God at one time onely declare, that he reſerved to himſelf liberty to diſtinguiſh between the ſons of *Abraham*, as to their enjoyment of the promiſed inheritance, and other extraordinary priviledges; but he declared it again concerning the ſons of *Iſaac*: For before the birth of the Twins which he had by *Rebecca*, and therefore when neither had done good or evil, whereby there ſhould be any difference made between them, it was reveled by God to her, that her elder ſon, that is, the people that ſhould be born of him, ſhould ſerve the younger, or the Nations that ſhould deſcend from him This I ſay, becauſe *Eſau* in his own perſon did never ſerve *Jacob*. And this appeareth farther, in that God told *Rebecca* at the ſame time, that *two NATIONS were in her womb*. So that God declared to *Rebecca*, that he intended

to

Part II to restrain the promise made to *Abraham* to the seed of *Jacob* onely; and that they alone were chosen by him to inherit the good land, together with its appendages. And this priviledge, he tells them here, they had not upon the account of any foreseen desert of theirs, but onely of *his* free goodness that *called* or *designed* them thereunto. Then he thus proceedeth,

V. 13. *As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.* This is a quotation out of *Malachi* 1. 2, 3. where *Esau*'s person was not spoken of; but by *Esau*, his posterity the *Edomites* are understood; as you will see, if you consult the place. Some conceive, that whereas God saith by the Prophet that he hated *Esau* or the *Edomites*, he meant no more than that he less loved them than the *Israelites*, or was not so kinde to *them*, as he was to *these*; in that whereas he gave

Jacob

Jacob or the *Israelites* a land flowing with milk and honey, the portion of *Esau* or the *Edomites* was the stony and barren mountains of *Seir.* And it is certain that so the word that signifieth *to hate* is in many places to be understood. As *Gen.* 29.31. *Jacob* is said to *hate Leah*; i.e. he loved *Rachel* better, as appeareth by the foregoing verse. In *Luke* 14. 26. we are required to *hate our father and mother*, &c. and *John* 12.25. to *hate our lives*. But nobody understands by *hating* these, any more than not loving them so well as Christ. But however, I conceive that by *hating* in this chapter of *Malachi*, is to be understood very severely punishing: and indeed, the words following make this evident. And observe that the Apostle doth here onely allude to these words of the Prophet: nor doth he say, that *before the children had done either good or evil*, God said, *Jacob have I loved*, Part II

Par. II *I loved, and Eſau have I hated*; but onely, *The elder ſhall ſerve the younger.* But as for that ſaying, *Eſau have I hated*, it was after their wicked and moſt unnatural behaviour towards their brethren the *Iſraelites*, and alſo upon that account; as you will ſee, if you compare this place with the Prophecie of *Obadiah*; where, in verſ. 10. it is ſaid, *For thy violence againſt thy brother Jacob ſhame ſhall cover thee, and thou ſhalt be cut off for ever*: And in the next verſes, we ſee what the violence they are charged with was. I confeſs I do not know but that I am ſingular in this Expoſition; but it is ſo very evident, that I ſhould wonder if ſeveral Expoſitors ſhould not have hit upon it. Now then the Apoſtle ſaith,

V. 14. *Is there unrighteouſneſs with God? God forbid.* i. e. Will God be unjuſt in caſting off the ſeed of *Abraham*, *Iſaac* and *Jacob*, which

which ſtrictly obſerve the Law given them by *Moſes*, and making thoſe of the Gentiles his ſpecial favourites in their ſtead, that believe his Revelation made by Chriſt and his Apoſtles? No ſurely, we cannot accuſe him of injuſtice if he doth ſo; for it is but agreeable to his own words to *Moſes*. Part II

V. 15. *For he ſaith to Moſes, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compaſſion on whom I will have compaſſion.* i. e. I will beſtow my kindneſs where I pleaſe, without giving account thereof to any one. And therefore God may juſtly accept Gentiles to his ſpecial favour, as idolatrous and wicked as generally they are, (for he is not obliged to damn all that deſerve it) and caſt off his ancient people the Jews at his pleaſure, as ſtrict obſervers as they are of one Law, they being diſobedient to another. Then he thus proceeds: V. 16.

Par. II. V. 16. *So then it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that ſheweth mercy.* i. e. From thence it is evident, that this mercy and favour of God is not the deſert or prerogative of thoſe that with great zeal aſpire to it, but in a wrong way, *viz.* by the *Moſaical* performances; as the Jews do, (this you will ſee is very clear by v. 31, 32.) but to be had from the free grace and mercy of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. Then in the verſe following the Apoſtle proceeds to ſhew that God had reſerved liberty to himſelf, not onely in beſtowing benefits on whom, and on what conditions he pleaſeth; but alſo in inflicting puniſhments, and ſo caſting off the Jews, notwithſtanding their zeal for the Law of *Moſes*: for this he tells them God had given them a plain teſtimony, concerning his dealing in the like caſe, *viz.* ſhewing his ſeverity againſt obſti-

nate

Theoph. But how is it imaginable then, that they ſhould run ſo ſoon from one Extreme to another, as they muſt have done, if the forementioned ſuſpicion of ſome be true. But however, I can by no means underſtand how it ſhould come to paſs, that thoſe Fathers of the Church that almoſt immediately ſucceeded the Apoſtles, ſhould in ſuch a point as this, (which is pretended to be ſo clearly revealed) depart from them. *Juſtin Martyr* wrote his Apology for the Chriſtians but fifty years after St *John*'s death, as appeareth by the Apology it ſelf; I mean that written to the Emperour, Senate, and People of *Rome*; for therein he tells them, that it is now one hundred and fifty years ſince Chriſt's Nativity; and St *John* died according to both *Euſebius* and St *Hierom* ſixty eight years after his Paſſion; and therefore a 1000 or 101 after his Birth. Now *Juſtin* in Part II.

Part II.

ſeveral of his undoubted Books expreſly contradicteth that Doctrine; and ſo he doth particularly in his Firſt Apology, *viz.* that to *Antoninus Pius*; which the forementioned *Euſebius* and St *Hierom* ſay was the firſt, though it be ſet in the ſecond place. The like alſo doth *Athenagoras* who was *Juſtin*'s Equal; and *Irenæus* frequently, who was Scholar to *Polycarpus*, who was Scholar to St *John* the Evangeliſt. And I can give you many more inſtances, as *Tatianus*, *Tertullian*, *Clemens Alexandrinus*, *Origen*, *&c.* but that this is a moſt plain and confeſſed caſe.

Philal. This Doctrine, as it hath of late years been ſtated, (as I have been informed) was never known till fourteen hundred years after our Saviours Birth, in the Chriſtian world.

Theoph. But I aſſure you, *Philalethes*, whoſoever told you ſo, miſinformed you: For that which is

as

as like to it as an Egg is to an Egg, or Milk to Milk, was held and taught in the first Ages of the Church. Part II.

Philal. You seem now to contradict what you last said.

Theoph. No, but I do not.

Philal. By *whom* was it taught then?

XXXIV. *That the Old* Gnosticks *were great Friends to it.*

Theoph. By the Old *Gnosticks*; as you will see if you consult *Irenæus*, and *Origens* Philocalia: where you have them urging the very same Scriptures for it, that are now urged; and by those Fathers, but especially by *Origen*, you shall find them answered. And by this means it was that the first Fathers were so express in declaring themselves in this matter.

Philal. Those *Gnosticks* (as ancient as they were) are but a slender Credit to that Cause they are found Friends to.

Theoph. They were (as I can

Part II.

largely ſhew you) the moſt monſtrous *Hereticks* that ever the Chriſtian Church was infeſted with, from its firſt Plantation to this very day; as many other vile ones as there have been: And they were as horribly prophane *Devils* alſo, as ever the Earth bore: And the Doctrine of Men's being under an irreſiſtible Fate of being wicked and miſerable, or good and happy, was their great Encouragement ſo to be, as appeareth by their being ſo concerned for the propagation of it. Nor were they ſo meal-mouthed as to ſtick at declaring the too natural ſequel from it that all good men abominate, *viz. That God is the Author of ſin*: As alſo that other which all ſuch muſt abominate alſo, that underſtand it, *viz.* That all Vertue and Vice are made ſo by arbitrary Laws; and founded in the Divine Will; that is, that they are meer φάνλασια, only imaginary things,

things, and nothing in themſelves. Well, *Philalethes*, it is high time to have done with this, we are gotten into a large field, and ſcarcely know how to get out of it. The truth is, I did not think, when we entered on this Diſcourſe, to be held in it one quarter of this time; but one word hath inſenſibly drawn on another; and indeed we may as eaſily perſiſt in it twice thus long. Let us therefore bethink our ſelves, and proceed to what remaineth. Part II.

Philal. I ſhall only deſire firſt to mind you of a paſſage I have read in the Life of the moſt Judicious and Pious Mr *Joſeph Mede*, written by the Learned Dr *Worthington*, and affixed to his Elaborate Works; which is this: *If at at any time* (as it was ſaid of St *Paul* at *Athens*) *his Spirit was ſtirred in him, it was when he obſerved ſome to contend with an unmeaſurable confidence, and bitter zeal, for the Black Doctrine of Abſolute Reproba-*

XXXV. *Mr* Joſeph Mede *his Judgment concerning this Point.*

tion,

Part II.

tion, upon which occaſion he could not forbear to tell ſome of his Friends, that it was an Opinion he could never digeſt; being herein much of Dr Jackſons *mind, that generally the Propugners of ſuch Tenets were men reſolved in their Affections of Love and Hatred, both of which they exerciſed conſtantly, and violently, and according to their own tempers, made a judgment of God and his Decrees.* Several more paſſages relating to the ſame matter, you may (if you have not already) *there* alſo read; which ſhew his judgment in this particular; as much a *Calviniſt* as he was accounted.

XXXVI. *The Church of* England *no favourer of it.*

Theoph. He therein ſhewed himſelf to be of his Mother the Church of *England*'s temper; who injoyns us, in Her 17 Article, To receive Gods Promiſes in ſuch wiſe, as they are generally ſet forth to us in Holy Scriptures. And now let us return to thoſe Sons of Hers, that were the occaſion of all this Talk. And take

take notice, that as in *this* laſt, ſo in divers other of thoſe Points, about which there hath been ſo great a Conteſt, and which have raiſed ſuch Feuds and Animoſities betwixt Proteſtants, their moderation is very remarkable. For they have not (as hath been too general a practice) Endeavoured to run as far from their Adverſaries as poſſibly they could; but carefully obſerving what truth may be found in their Opinions, and heedfully ſeparating it from what they conceive Erroneous in them, they have, I ſay in ſome more, which with too great heat have been Controverted among us, ſteered a middle Courſe; which time will not admit me now to inlarge upon, and therefore I will not ſo much as inſtance in them.

Part II.

XXXVII. *The Moderation of thoſe Divines in other matters of Controverſie which* Theophilus *hath not time to inſiſt upon, very remarkable.*

Philal. Therefore it is no great wonder, that it fares with them, as uſually it doth with thoſe that endeavour

Part II.

deavour to part a fray, that they are beaten on both ſides, and exclaimed againſt by the hot men of the ſeveral extreams.

XXXVIII. *None more diſliked by them than the Monopolizers of Truth to a Party.*

Theoph. But whomſoever they diſſent from, there are none they can worſe brook, than the Monopolizers of Truth to a Party, or thoſe that make the judgments of ſuch, as they moſt admire, the Standards of it. Nor will an *ipſe dixit* be admitted by them as a ſufficient Argument to prove any Doctrine by, if it be underſtood of any but God himſelf: They not thinking the wiſeſt and beſt of men, or *Churches* either, as priviledged from a poſſibility of being deceived. They therefore look upon it as very unreaſonable, for any to go about to knock down their Adverſaries with humane Authorities, and to deprive each other of their liberty to judge for themſelves.

Philal.

XXXIX. *Infallibility in the beſt of Men, or Churches, denyed by them.*

Philal. This is ſo great a fault, that it is not poſſible any *Proteſtant* ſhould be guilty of it, and not contradict his own profeſſed Principles. For do we not all moſt highly condemn the Practice of the Roman Church, in erecting an infallible Chair for the Judicial deciding of Controverſies in Religion, and to give men the true ſenſe of Scripture?

Theoph. And upon the ſame grounds, that all Proteſtants complain of that Corrupted Church; theſe Perſons greatly blame thoſe, whoſe practice is in this particular, like to theirs: and that while they inveigh againſt the Pope, make Popes of themſelves; or of the Maſters of their ſeveral Sects; and ſo intrench, as he doth, upon God's Authority.

Philal. But I perceive, there

Part II.

are thoſe among our ſelves that ſeem, by their talk, to lay no leſs weight upon the Judgment of the Church, than the Papiſts themſelves do.

XL. *Of the infallibility of the Church, and thoſe Proteſtants that ſeem to be Sticklers for it.*

Theoph. But I would gladly hear them ſpeak out, and tell us what Church they mean. Surely they cannot mean the Church of *England*; for if ſhe be infallible, it is more than ſhe knows or believes her ſelf; for whoever reads her Articles, may ſwear ſhe renounceth all claim to Infallibility. But if ſhe did not, how miſerably would ſhe be baffled out of her Pretence thereto by her Sons Arguments againſt the infallibility of the Church of *Rome*?

Philal. I ſuppoſe they mean the Truly Ancient, Catholick and Apoſtolick Church.

Theoph. Very good; But where ſhall we look for her Decrees?

If

If it be ſaid in the Writings of the Apoſtles; we will cry up the Churches infallibility, and believing as ſhe believeth as much as any. But then, who ſhall judge of the true ſenſe of thoſe Writings, in matters diſputable? Part II.

Philal. Surely they ſay more than ſo.

Theoph. Will they ſay, That the Churches Judgment is to be found in the Ancient Fathers? But we are like to be but ſorrily helped by that means too, they differing ſo much among themſelves, as 'tis well known they do; and there being but *few* things, if *any*, beſides ſuch as are moſt plainly revealed, wherein they are all unanimous. And in *ſuch* points, why may not *We* alſo be unanimous, and that as well without their help as with it?

Philal. But there are ſome that

Part II.

XLI. *Of acquieſcing in the Four firſt Oecumenical Councils.*

cry up the Four firſt Oecumenical Councils, as our great Standard; and aſſert that their Determinations ought to be by all acquieſced in.

Theoph. But there are few Controverted Points determined by them; what then ſhall we do as to all other? But beſides, what aſſurance have we that thoſe Councils aſcribed Infallibility to themſelves? But ſuppoſe they did, muſt we believe them infallible upon their own bare word? If any will aſſert ſo, they muſt prove it, except we are bound to believe them as infallible as thoſe Councils; and if they undertake to prove this, who ſhall judge whether they do it well or no? They muſt ſay every man's own reaſon, or hold their peace; and if ſo, then all is at laſt to be thereinto reſolved. Nor is it any mens ſaying that General

General Councils are infallible, that will cauſe conſiderative men one jot the ſooner to embrace their Decrees, unleſs their underſtandings be firſt convinced by a proof of it. If any will ſay, that thoſe Councils proved themſelves, or ſhall for them go about to prove that they were infallible; the ſame Queſtion recurrs, who ſhall judge whether this be done convincingly? And ſo the matter comes again to the ſame Iſſue. Part II.

Philal. But you do not *contemn* the Authoriy of thoſe Councils?

Theoph. I am ſo far from it, that I have a great Veneration both for the Ancient Fathers, and all General Councils that have been impartially Called; and whoſe members have been under no reſtraint, but were freely permitted to ſpeak their minds, and give their

Part II. their Suffrages; but I muſt tell you, that ſuch have been at *moſt* very *rarely* known. Yet I will not aſcribe more to ſuch neither, than I have good reaſon for; much leſs will I believe them infallible againſt plain reaſons, too many to be now given. If I could think any ſo, I ſhould be moſt inclined to believe it, of the Great Jewiſh Sanhedrin, becauſe the Jews were expreſly Commanded to ſtand to their Determinations; but he that will ſay *that* Council could not err, muſt renounce his Chriſtianity, and believe that it juſtly Condemn'd our Saviour.

Philal. What is the Veneration then that you ſay you have for thoſe Councils?

XLII. *What reſpect is due to Councils.*

Theoph. I ſay, that we ought rather to ſuſpect our own private Judgments, than without very apparent reaſon to conclude their

their Determinations falſe. And moreover, that it is our duty in order to the preſerving of the Churches peace, not publickly to oppoſe them, whatſoever opinion we have of them. For ſuppoſing them obnoxious to errour, yet I will grant them to have the Authority of Courts of Appeal, and that their Power is ſo great as to bind men to outward ſubmiſſion, when their errours are not ſo weighty as to preponderate the Churches peace. But though we ought for peace-ſake to ſubmit to them, in all things that are not contrary to the great Eſſentials of our Faith; yet (as I ſaid) there is no warrant for our being obliged to aſſent to their Decrees (*quatenus* ſo) as infallibly true. But for all this ſaying, neither I, nor thoſe friends of ours (who are all, I believe, of the ſame Judgment in this point)

Part II. point) do no less value all General Councils then doth our Mother the Church of *England*, as appears by what she saith of them in her 21 Article, whose words are these; *General Councils may not be gathered together without the Commandment and Will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, forasmuch as they be an Assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God, they may erre, and sometime have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to Salvation, have neither Strength nor Authority, unless it may be declared that they are taken out of Holy Scripture.* And it will not be amiss to mind you also; that in her 19 Article she declares not onely that the Church of *Rome*, but also that those of *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch* have actually erred. By these Citations you will easily guess, who are most of the Church of *England*'s Judgment

XLIII. *The Church of England's sense of General Councils.*

Judgment in this Point; whether *we* or *thoſe* Perſons, whoſe talk we but now took notice of, and which occaſioned this Diſcourſe. And the like to what was ſaid of General Councils, we alſo moſt heartily acknowledge concerning our own particular Church, *viz.* That we are bound by no means to oppoſe the Determinations of her Governours and Repreſentatives in diſputable Matters; nor do they (as hath been ſhewn) require our internal Aſſent to their Articles, but enjoyn our ſubmiſſion to them, as to an Inſtrument of Peace onely. And what wiſe and good man can think, though he ſhould ſuppoſe them (not only ſubject to error, but likewiſe) to have actually erred in ſome of them, that Contention about them can by any means make amends for the loſs of the Churches Peace?

XLIV. *The Determinations of our own Church not to be oppoſed in Matters diſputable.*

Philal. It is too apparent that thoſe which contend for an Infallible Judg

Part II.

of Controversies in Religion, are like to do no service towards the ending of them, but indeed so much disservice as to encrease them. Seeing there is nothing more hard to prove, than that there is any such Judge; and, if there be, where he is to be found: And in the determining of this Controversie, the Reason of every mans own mind must be appealed to, except there be another Judge to resolve us concerning that Judge; and again, another to satisfie us concerning him, and so we shall never have done. And I look upon this as a most certain Argument, that our Saviour never intended us any other, besides our own Reason, assisted with his Blessing; for if he had, he would, no doubt, have been so plainly deciphered, as that there should be no dispute about him; much less would that which was ordained for the Churches Peace, be an unavoidable occasion of Contention.

XLV. *An Argument that Christ intended us no infallible Judge of Controversies.*

Theoph.

Part II.

Theoph. For my part, I ſee no need of any other Judge, for the Rule of our Faith, the Scripture, is in all Eſſential Points ſo plain, that we can not reaſonably deſire to have it plainer: And moreover, in ſuch Points, every private honeſt Chriſtian hath a promiſe of Infallibility in the ſame ſence, that the Church Repreſentative hath. *If any man will do his Will,* (ſaith our Saviour) *he ſhall know of the Doctrine whether it be of God,* John 7. 17. *If ye continue in my Words, then are ye my Diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the Truth,* Joh. 8. 31, 32. & ſeveral other promiſes there are to the ſame purpoſe. I grant, the Church cannot err in *Fundamentals,* while ſhe continues ſo, for ſhould ſhe, ſhe would, *ipſo facto,* ceaſe ſo to be; and therefore the ſame is to be aſſerted alſo concerning every particular Member of it. And as for *Circumſtantials,* why may not men diſpute about them, and maintain peace and love notwithſtanding? What is

XLVI. *Private Chriſtians promiſed Infallibility in the ſame ſence that the Church Repreſentative hath the promiſe of it.*

Part II. there in not thinking juſt alike in doubtful Matters, that ſhould make people ſo much as angry with each other? I like not, I confeſs, a Diſputatious wrangling and contradicting Humour; I deſpiſe nothing more; it argues thoſe, in whom it is obſervable, to have attained to no ſolid judgment or ſenſe of things; and beſides, there is a deal of conceitedneſs and pride in it, and too much, ordinarily, of a croſs-graind and ill nature. But amicable Diſputes ſometimes, meerly in order to the finding out of Truth, can have no other than a good effect: and moreover, they add much to the pleaſure of Converſation. And therefore let the Profeſſors of Chriſtianity labour for the true ſpirit and temper of Chriſtians; and it will be as well with the Chriſtian World, as if we were all of the ſame mind. I mean, let us not magiſterially impoſe upon one another, and be ſo charitable as to believe well of

XLVII. *Of Diſputacity.*

XLVIII. *Of Friendly Diſputes.*

XLIX. *The way to peace.*

Diſ-

Part II.

Diſſenters from us that live good lives, are of a modeſt and peaceable deportment, and hold no Opinions, that directly oppoſe the deſign of the Chriſtian Religion, and of making men like to God; and then we ſhall ſee, that there will be little reaſon to deſire an Infallible Judge of Controverſies, to make us all of one Opinion. So that by this pleading for one, (the Caſe ſtanding as it doth) there is no hope of having an end put to them, but by this means (as you ſaid well) is there another Controverſie added to the reſt; and this alone, except it were more plainly decidable than it is, may cauſe as much wrangling, as the Church is now diſturbed with.

L. *The miſchief of contending for an Infallible Judge.*

So that, *Philalathes*, thoſe Friends of ours cannot but judge it a piece of Tyranny, too near of kin to that of the Cruel *Procruſtes*, for any to endeavour to force others to be juſt of their pitch and ſize in Opinions, and to approve of their Sentiments.

LI. *Forcing others to be of our mind tyrannical.*

Philal.

Philal. And well they may: For by this means, though men may make Hypocrites, and cause some to profess what they do not believe, yet they can never make any sincere Converts; but rather so much the more alienate Dissenters, both in their Judgments and Affections, from their *Religion*.

Theoph. There cannot be a more effectual Course taken so to do, than this is. And though men of some Tempers may not be able to contain themselves from over-much warmth in managing a Dispute; yet it is no less unreasonable to *malign* our Brethren, because they are not in every thing, or in several things of our Judgment, than to quarrel with each other, upon the account of the unlikeness we observe, in our Faces and Constitutions.

LII. *To condemn men for dissenting from us unwarrantable.*

Philal. 'Tis, surely, utterly unwarrantable, and most unaccountable to Censure and Condemn those Persons as

as Hereticks, that diſſent from us in any matters, not very clearly revealed in Scripture, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they do ſo. It being very evident, that where its ſence is doubtful, we have a liberty of thinking one way or other: and that we are not ſo much as *Culpable* in miſunderſtanding ſuch places as are capable of various Interpretations, if we are not wanting to our ſelves in our endeavours to underſtand them; If we ſuffer not our ſelves to be lead by Parties, Prejudices, and the like, in our Enquiries after Truth.

Theoph. Our underſtandings are not free, as are our wills; but the Acts of them are natural and neceſſary: Nor can they judge but according to the Evidence that is preſented. The Underſtanding is like the the Eye, which cannot *apprehend* the Object, but as it offereth it ſelf; nor can it otherwiſe *judge* of Objects, than the nature of the Reaſons that are offered will endure. *Philal.*

Philal. But *Theophilus*, though that faculty can never properly deſerve blame, when it is deceived; yet mens *Wills* may, and I fear often do; and that many ſuffering them to lie under the power of prejudice, and to be governed by ſome inordinate affection, are by that means careleſs of providing their underſtandings with due helps for making a true judgment.

Theoph. You ſay well; but this no man can be a competent Judge of in any one that doth not declare it by unwarrantable practiſing upon his Opinions; and therefore to be incenſed againſt men meerly for not being of our mind, and not having the ſame thoughts that we have in uncertain points, may be to find fault with the make of their Intellectuals, and to condemn them for that which they cannot help.

Philal. If our Saviour had laid ſuch great weight, as too many nowadayes do, on ſuch things; if he had made

made a right understanding and belief of them a necessary condition of Salvation, we may be assured that the love he beareth to man-kind, would have caused him to speak most plainly, and to have taken a course that his Apostles should do so likewise, where it is of such infinite importance not to mistake his meaning. Part II.

LIII. *Of these Divines candour towards dissenters from them.*

Theoph. There is no doubt to be made of it. Now then I say, *Philalethes*, that those Divines, from these Considerations, and such like, are not at all forward to conclude any man an Heretick, or erring damnably, that is of a Perswasion contrary to theirs; supposing his Opinions do not so evidently contradict the Scriptures, as that it is unimaginable how any should not see it, that do not purposely shut their eyes. And can hope well of any one, notwithstanding his mistakes, if they be not inconsistent

Part II.

sistent with true Goodness, and have no bad influence upon his Practice. They are so perswaded of the graciousness of the Divine Nature, that they verily believe that *simple* Errors shall be destructive to none, I mean, *those* which men have not contracted by their own default; and that where mistakes proceed not from evil affections, and an erring *judgment* from a corrupt *heart*, through the goodness of God, they shall not prove damnable. But that he will allow, and make abatements for the weakness of Mens Parts, their Complections, Educations, and other ill Circumstances, whereby they may be even *fatally* inclined to certain false Perswasions.

Philal. I remember, to this purpose, a good saying of the Learned and Pious *Chillingworth*, in his excellent Book against the *Papists*. *I am* (saith he) *verily perswaded, that Errors*

Errors ſhall not be imputed to them as ſins, who uſe ſuch a meaſure of induſtry in finding Truth, as humane Prudence, and ordinary Diſcretion (their Abilities and Opportunities, their Diſtractions and Hindrances, and all other things conſidered) ſhall adviſe them to. Part II.

Theoph. 'Tis a ſaying, like one of that brave Perſons, who had he lived till theſe dayes, would moſt aſſuredly have been branded with the hateful long Name, as he was before his death; with thoſe of *Papiſt* and *Socinian* (and which adds to the wonder) for the ſake of that his Book.

LIV. *Of Mr.* Chilling-worth's *Book.*

Philal. I ſcarcely ever more admired at any thing, then at the Character I have read of that Piece.

Theoph. As vile a Book as not only all *Papiſts*, but ſome alſo that would be thought no Friends to them think it; I am ſure he would do a very excellent piece of Service, (which all good *Proteſtants*

Part II.

would have cauſe to thank him for) that would take the pains to tranſlate it into the Latin Tongue, I think it great pitty that it ſhould be kept lockt up in our own Language. But to proceed, as that Gentleman was not, ſo *theſe* alſo we are ſpeaking of, are not at all forward to give a Catalogue of Fundamentals; but inſtead thereof, content themſelves to tell their Hearers, that it is ſufficient for any mans Salvation, that he aſſent to the truth of the Holy Scriptures, that he carefully endeavour to underſtand their true meaning, ſo far as concerns his own duty, and to order his life accordingly. And that he whoſe Conſcience tells him, upon an impartial inquiry into himſelf, that he doth thus, need not fear that he erreth damnably. But into the number of the Doctrines, they account Fundamentals, they will by no means

LV. *Of their Opinion concerning Fundamentals, and that they are not forward to give a catalogue of them.*

means admit any, that are not plainly revealed, as hath been already intimated, with the reason why. And for the same reason they doubt not, but that according to mens various Capacities, means of knowledge, and such like; the same points of Faith may be to some fundamental, and to others not: I mean, may be necessary to be known, and explicitely believed by some, but not so by others; which was likewise before in effect said. Part II.

LVI. *The use of the foregoing Principles.*

Philal. Well, *Theophilus*, you have imparted to me, I thank you, very excellent Principles. Without doubt they would be greatly effectual to the cementing of our present differences, and healing our lamentable wide Breaches, if they were generally entertained by Christians, and improved. What a brave World should we have, would we but all practise upon such

Part II. ſuch Principles? This would be the way to unite thoſe in *Affection*, that differ in *Opinion*.

Theoph. And this would be the way too, to make far fewer differences in Opinion: For then would not men be ſuperſtitiouſly fearful of impartially examining thoſe Doctrines, the truth of which, they now think it a ſin ſo much as to call in queſtion. And by this means, taking all thoſe they have been inſtructed in for granted, there is little hope of ever undeceiving them. Theſe Principles, being well digeſted, will likewiſe mightily quiet mens minds, and cure them of all tormenting fears, of their being out of the true way to Bleſſedneſs, while they are not conſcious to themſelves of living in the allowance of any known ſin, or neglect of any ſuch duty, that they ſeek Truth impartially, and adopt not

not any Opinion, in order to the gratifying of any corrupt affection. Part II.

Philal. They will certainly unshakle, and disintangle mens minds and give them their due liberty; they will enlarge and widen their Souls, and make them in an excellent and most commendable sence, men of Latitude.

Theoph. You make me smile at that conceit. But yet, *Philalethes*, as excellent and very useful as they are, and must needs appear to be, to any one that will give himself leave to consider them, those Friends of ours, by their endeavours to propagate them, have procured to themselves enemies of divers sorts. Their thus doing, vexeth to the heart all peremptory and magisterial Dictators of whatsoever Party they be: This whets the Tongues of those against them, whose great ambition it is to *lead*, & of

LVII. *That those Divines procure to themselves Enemies of divers sorts, by their endeavours to propagate those Principles.*

Part II. of thoſe no leſs, that take as great pleaſure in being *led*, and in following blind-fold either ſome particular *men*, or certain *Church*.

Philal. Concerning theſe latter, it may be ſaid, (as *Tacitus* doth of ſome) that they are, *Nati ad Servitutem*, Born to be Slaves; and think bondage a great bleſſing: For otherwiſe how could they be ſo highly diſpleaſed with the charity of thoſe that would ſet them free? I preſume, *Theophilus*, that it might be upon this account that ſo much Choler diſcovered it ſelf in a Reverend Doctor, (whoſe *years* alone, it might be thought, ſhould have taught him much more diſcretion) and provoked the angry man, not very long ſince, to ſhoot from the Pulpit moſt dreadful Thunderbolts againſt theſe Divines, in a Learned Auditory.

Theoph. There are thoſe that ſuſpect, that 'twas envy chiefly that put him upon taking ſo much vain pains

to render them odious to Gentlemen too wiſe, to do other than pity him for his labour; he finding himſelf (as great as he thinks his own deſerts) leſs regarded, than ſome of thoſe vile perſons. Moreover, *Philalethes*, thence it is that ſome who have more Zeal than Diſcretion, (and I wiſh I had not cauſe to ſay more Paſſion and Pride than either) do inveigh againſt them as thoſe, that are ſo far from true Sons of the Church, that they are her Enemies, and undermine her; and more dangerous people than the worſt of Sects. And thence it is that others too, who are of the ſame temper, though of a contrary Faction, joyn with theſe in accuſing them as men luke-warm in the Cauſe of God, and unconcerned for the Orthodox Religion; nay ſuch as are ſo far from contending earneſtly for the Faith once given to the Saints, that they expoſe it, and endanger the loſs of it. Part II.

Part II. *Philal.* I think in my Conscience, they take the only course to preserve it. But it seems those men take it for granted, in the mean time, that those Opinions they are pleased to call theirs, must needs be of no less account with God, than with themselves; and that those they think good to brand with the black mark of Fundamental Heresies, cannot be otherwise; and that there can be no effectual confuting of them, but when the Persons that hold them are cursed with Bell, Book, and Candle, and have the severest and most dismal of Sentences past upon them.

Part III *Theoph.* You may be sure of it. But is it not time, think you, *Philalethes*, to acquaint you with those Divines Judgment in Matters of Discipline?

I. *Their judgment in matters of Discipline.*

Philal. Yes, if you think so.

Theoph. Come on then. This following, be you assured, is a true account thereof. Namely, That to all Forms

Forms of Eccleſiaſtical Government, they greatly prefer that of *Epiſcopacy*; becauſe it is apparent that ſo much as is *eſſential* to that Government, did univerſally take place in the Church preſently after the Apoſtles times, and therefore it is very probable that it was alſo in their dayes: It being hardly conceivable, that ſo great an alteration as that of *Presbyterian*, or Congregational to *Epiſcopal* Government, could in a little time have prevailed over all the World, and have continued for ſo many Ages together, if it had been otherwiſe.

II. *That they prefer Epiſcopacy to all other Forms of Church Government.*

Philal. How much do they or you conceive to be Eſſential to *Epiſcopacy*, and therefore agreeable to the Primitive Pattern?

Theoph. Mr. *Chillingworth* ſhall anſwer you that Queſtion. *If we abſtract* (ſaith he) *from Epiſcopal Government all Accidentals, and conſider onely what is* eſſential *and* neceſſary *to it; We ſhall find in it no more than this: An appoint-*

III. *How much eſſential to Epiſcopacy.*

Part III

pointment of one man of eminent Sanctity, and Sufficiency to have the care of all the Churches, within a certain Precinct or Diocess; and furnishing him with Authority (not Absolute or Arbitrary, but regulated and bounded by Laws, and moderated, by joyning to him a convenient number of Assistants) to the intent that all the Churches under him may be provided of good and able Pastors: and that both of Pastors and People conformity to Laws, and performance of their duties may be required, under Penalties, not left to discretion, but by Law appointed.

IV. *That they unchurch not those Churches that will not admit it, though they think it desirable that all would.*

Philal. By the account you have given me of those Divines, I am confident they do not unchurch those Churches that will not admit of this Government, as highly as they themselves approve of it.

Theoph. If they should, they would be very inconsistent with their own Principles. But let me tell you, they cannot but look upon it as very desirable, that those few Churches that refuse

refuſe it, would receive it, upon more accounts than that of its great Antiquity. I need not tell you, that they moreover believe the Civil Magiſtrate to have a Power, both Legiſlative and Judiciary, as well in *Sacred*, as in *Civil Affairs*. Part III.

V. *Their Opinion of the power of the civil Magiſtrate in Sacred Affairs.*

Philal. But this will not be admitted by many *Proteſtants*, any more than by the *Papiſts* themſelves.

Theoph. I know it will not; and that ſome very fiercely talk againſt it, where they think they may do it ſafely, but they bewray too much ignorance in ſo doing. For (as the Learned Author of the Ancient Liberty of the Britannick Church hath ſhewn) as Fathers of Families were at firſt both Princes and Prieſts, and as by the encreaſe of Families, and their enlargement into Cities and Communities, the Oeconomick Authority at length became Politick: So it is apparant, that in the firſt Inſtitution of Prieſthood, *Moſes* took away

VI. *That the Civil Magiſtrate hath a power both Legiſlative and Judiciary in Eccleſiaſtical Affairs.*

Part III

away no part of the Supream Juriſdiction from the Politick Authority; for he, as King of *Jeſurun*, was conſtituted by God himſelf the Keeper, as well of both Trumpets, as Tables. And as *Moſes*, not *Aaron*, delivered the Ceremonial Law; ſo long after *Moſes*, King *David*, inſtituted the Courſes of Prieſts, and *Solomon* thruſt out *Abiathar* the High Prieſt. And when Chriſt inaugurated his Apoſtles, he furniſht them with great powers of his own, ſuch as the Adminiſtration of Sacraments, and the power of the Keys; but all that he beſtowed on them, he did it Cumulatively, and nought at all Privitively; for he detracted nothing from the Authority of the Civil Power; nor gave any Commandment that Kings, becauſe Chriſtians, ſhould have their Juriſdiction abated. But you may find this Subject excellently, and more fully handled, in the former

mer part of the Diſcourſe of *Eccleſiaſtical Polity*, lately publiſht. Part III

Philal. Seeing, *Theophilus*, thoſe Divines are of thoſe good Subjects, that heartily acknowledge the Kings Majeſty to be Supream Governour, in theſe his Dominions, in all Cauſes, as well Eccleſiaſtical as Civil; they muſt needs likewiſe believe, that the Church Government He hath Conſtituted, may not without the guilt of Rebellion be violently oppoſed, or of Sedition, be in any kind affronted by any of his Subjects.

VII. *Their Opinion of the Authority of the Church.*

Theoph. You may be aſſured of it, *Philalethes*, of any (as well as them) that are not next door to Mad-men. And theſe our Friends acknowledge alſo, that it is in the power of the Governours of the Church to Compoſe Forms of Prayer to be uſed in Publick; and ſuch Rites as they in their Wiſdom ſhall conceive moſt proper for the decent, orderly and Reverend Solemnizing of Divine Wor-

Part III

Worſhip: And that it is the duty of all under their Authority to Submit to the uſe of ſuch Forms; ſuppoſing the matter of them be agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and that they are directed onely and immediately to God in the Name of Chriſt; and that they ought to conform to thoſe Rites, ſo long as they are of an indifferent nature, and not impoſed as neceſſary in themſelves, or eſſential parts of Worſhip, or to recommend the Worſhippers to God, and make their Service accepted, or to convey Grace, or as laying an Antecedent Bond upon the Judgment, as well as on the Practice; but only as things alterable, and in their own nature indifferent: And ſuch they conceive the Forms of Prayer, now enjoyned, to be; and the other Rites of our Church; and to be no otherwiſe than as ſuch impoſed.

Philal. But do they not likewiſe hold that Governors are obliged not only

only to make choice of ſuch Rites as are in their own nature indifferent; and to impoſe them as ſuch, but alſo to beware how they enjoyn any, that they are not on good grounds aſſured are for Edification? Part III

Theoph. This is out of doubt: And I preſume they alſo believe; that no Rites may be enjoyned, that are known to be but by accident, and the infirmity of the people generally inconvenient. But yet though Governors ſhould miſcarry in the diſcharge of their duty, they queſtion not but that the people are bound to obey them, while they command nothing but what is *lawful*, though it ſhould be *inconvenient*.

VIII. *That they believe Magiſtrates are to be obeyed when they command things inconvenient, if lawful.*

Philal. That Command of the Apoſtle; *Obey them that have the Rule over you in the Lord*, hath no ſuch limitation as this annexed, [*When they command things convenient.*] We are alſo required to ſubmit to *every* Ordinance of Man, for the Lords ſake:

Part III

Whether it be to the King as Supream, or unto Governors, as thoſe that are ſent by him.

Theoph. Nor ought that limitation to be implyed in theſe or the like Precepts: For that, though thoſe that are under Authority ought to judge for themſelves what is *lawful*; yet it is moſt unreaſonable, that the judgment of what is *convenient*, ſhould not be left to their Governors.

Philal. Nothing is more apparent, than that if the people ſhould have this liberty, it would tend to the invalidating of all Laws, and utter ſubverſion of Government.

Theoph. That's certain: Therefore theſe Divines, though they could heartily wiſh that nothing may be injoyned in the Worſhip of God among us, but what (conſidering the very outward Circumſtances we are in) may be as *expedient* as *lawful*; yet they eſteem it as unqueſtionably true, that the people ought to obey, even

even in those things that the Magistrate should not command: And that a certain duty (and such is Obedience to Authority) may not be forborn upon uncertain Conjectures, or any miscarriage in those to whom they owe it. The mischiefs of contending with Governors about supposed inconvenient things, being incomparably greater, than any that can follow upon obedience in such things. Part III

Philal. By what you have said, I easily guess what Opinion they have of that conceit, that hath of late years been broached and practised upon, *viz.* That when the Supream Magistrate refuseth to reform what is amiss in Church or State; the Subjects ought to take that work into their own hands.

*IX. *That they judge it unlawful for the people to take Arms against their Prince on any pretence.*

* *Theoph.* Do you only *guess* at it? You may be most certain, that they judge no Fancy more wild and mad, nor of more pernicious Consequence.

Part III

And know also that they profess unfeignedly to *believe* (as well as subscribe to it) that it is unlawful for the people to take up Arms against their Prince, or those commissionated by Him, upon any pretence whatsoever. I need not now inform you, *Philalethes*, whom by their forementioned Moderation, they greatly offend: You know that also upon *that* account they are condemned by some; who without any reason take themselves to be the only Sons of the Church, as false Friends to her: And that as by acknowledging no more, they anger that extream; so, by granting so much, they no less displease the other. But to proceed:

X. *That they are for shewing favour to Dissenters out of Conscience.*

These persons are not more for obedience to all lawful Commands of Authority, than desirous that Mercy and Indulgence should be shewn towards those whose Consciences will not permit them to comply with the

the Will of their Governours in some things disputable. Part III

Philal. But do they not conceive it to be most unfit, that *Seditious* Practices should pass unpunisht?

Theoph. Yes that they do: And do believe that those Dissenters from the establisht way of Religion, ought not to be esteemed or dealt with as men of tender Consciences, who are not quiet and peaceable, modest and charitable in their behaviour towards those, that are not of their Way and Mind: And that think it not enough, not to obey; but they must needs be likewise confronting Authority; and refuse to yeeld Obedience in those things against the lawfulness of which there can be no pretence, that carrieth any shew of Reason.

XI. *Whom they conceive are not to be dealt with as men of tender Consciences.*

Philal. I suppose they cannot but look upon it as extreamly desirable, that (if our Governours shall

Part III

ſhall ſee it good) the tearms of Communion with the Church of *England*, and likewiſe of exerciſing the Miniſterial Function therein, may be ſo inlarged, as to take in all that are of any Reaſon, Sobriety and Moderation.

Theoph. I wonder that all wiſe men ſhould not; it being ſo very plain a caſe, that this would tend exceedingly to the Churches ſecurity, and the ſtrengthening of her hands againſt unreaſonable, ill-minded, and wild-headed men of divers ſorts, who would rejoyce in nothing more, than in her utter Ruine, and are ready to catch at all advantages to effect it. And for that end, I preſume they would be very glad, if our Church Doors were ſet wider open, I mean, if ſome things that moſt offend were taken out of the way; and that no ſuch weight may be laid on any little things, as that they ſhould be

XII. Theophilus *preſumes that they would be glad, if ſome things that moſt offend were removed.*

be insisted on, to the endangering those of an higher nature, and hazarding the Churches prosperity and peace. And particularly, that there might be no Expressions in our Forms of Prayer, that contain disputable & uncertain Doctrines; and so give occasion to those that are dissatisfied concerning the truth of them, to refuse to joyn with us in those Forms: And in a word, that there might be nothing in our Ecclesiastical Constitution, that may give any plausible pretence for Separation or Non-conformity. This, I say, they cannot, I am perswaded, but heartily desire, but with submission to the wisdom of their Governors. Part III

And now, *Philalethes*, I have performed my promise of giving you an impartial Representation of those our Friends; and I pray tell me your thoughts, in a few words, upon the whole matter.

Philal.

Part III

XIII. Philalethes *his Opinion upon the whole account.*

Philal. From the account you have, I thank you, given me, I cannot but confidently conclude, that were many more tongues let loose against them than there are; there would need no other Solution of the *Phœnomenon*, than that of the Philosopher, *A wise man is the greatest Prodigy.* And I believe them the only sort of men, that are in any likely-hood of, or qualified for the repairing of our present dangerous Breaches, and curing our very ill presaging Animosities.

Theoph. For my part, I must professe to you, that I could scarcely perswade my self once to hope, that there may be any prevention of our utter Confusion, but that it hath pleased the Divine Providence to raise up among us so considerable a number of such good spirited and generously minded Persons, the thoughts whereof are

are my beſt Antidote againſt De- Part III
ſpondence.

Philal. That they chiefly deſign the propagation of Truth, and true Goodneſs, and not any private ſelfiſh intereſt, from what hath been ſaid I have cauſe to conclude: For the Practices and Principles that diſtinguiſh them from other men, have never yet, in any times, been the way to raiſe any; but the contrary.

XIV. *Why the* Bigots *of the ſeveral Parties are moſtly* their *Enemies.*

Theoph. 'Tis certain they have not. And the great reaſon why the *Bigots* of our ſeveral Parties, do chiefly ſet themſelves againſt *them*, muſt needs be becauſe they are aware, that of all their other Adverſaries, there are none that do them ſo much diſſervice as do theſe, by ſhewing, that thoſe things they raiſe ſuch a duſt about, and make ſuch a hideous ſtir and noiſe, ſignifie nothing (what ere they pretend) to the promoting of true

Part III

Religion, the advancement of Chriſt's Kingdom, and the real and true welfare of his Church, but are available only to the carrying on of ſuch little, narrow, and low deſigns as the making & ſtrengthning of Sects and Parties, and gaining to themſelves Greatneſs and Popularity. Thoſe high and hot Gentlemen know very well, that if theſe perſons Principles ſhould once get good footing among the People, they muſt either grow more cool in thoſe matters that do moſt exerciſe their Zeal, or there will be little for them to do.

Philal. The truth is, thoſe men trouble themſelves moſt about matters which (as an excellent Perſon ſaith) are neither Religion, nor the Body of Religion, nor ſcarcely the *Garment* of the Body of Religion; but are rather the Fringes of the Garment of the Body

dy of Religion. They are Things, or rather Circumstances and manners of things, wherein the Soul and Spirit are not at all concerned. Part III

Theoph. But yet as great an Antipathy as those kind of men profess against these Persons; I observe there are Prudent and Moderate Men in some of the Parties, that have a reverend esteem of them, and look upon them as men very valuable. Which Sober Persons are no less honoured and loved by *them* also; between whom the difference in Opinion is so inconsiderable, that it is pity there should be any distinction of Names between them.

XV. *That it is pity there should be any distinction of name between them and the moderate men of some parties.*

Philal. And if the generality of each of our Parties were as true to the Cause of Christ Jesus, and so self-denying, as to prefer his Interest before their own; I question not but that they and their Principles, would find incomparably more Friends among them, than they do now Enemies.

Part III

XVI. *What Name they only desire to be known by.*

Theoph. But whereas I now spake of the distinction of Names, I must desire you to take notice, that if others were not better at Coining them, than these our Friends are, they would be known by no other than the good old *Antiochian* one, *viz.* *Christians*, or (if they must have one that is more discriminating) Obedient Sons of the Church of *England*.

Philal. To which Church I cannot better express the sincerity of my affection, than by wishing that all those who are ambitious of being accounted her most genuine Off-spring, were of the Temper and Principles of these her Children, if they were, I doubt not but that her Circumstances would be far less sad than now they are.

Theoph. Nay it is not at all then improbable, but that in due time, her condition (as seemingly desperate as at present it is) may be very good,

good. I need not tell you, *Philaletheſ*, that theſe mens temper and free Principles are of no late ſtanding; for they are no whit younger than Chriſtianity it ſelf, nor yet than the Bleſſed Founder of it: Who, were he now upon the Earth, and converſant here among us, would, I doubt, narrowly eſcape the reproach of the Long Name, as much as thoſe that in ſpite and contempt uſe it, pretend to be his only Friends and Followers. For I might ſhew in ſeveral Inſtances, that it was upon the account of his being ſuch a one, as they are accuſed for being, that the Zealous Phariſees could by no means endure him. As particularly his Free Converſation, void of all Sourneſs, Starchtneſs, & Affectation; his condemning their Oſtentatious ſhews of Sanctimony, their baſe Cenſuring and Judging, their Scrupulous ſtraining at Gnats, when in the mean time they ſwallowed Camels: Their teaching for Do-

Part III

XVII. *That their temper and free Principles are of no late ſtanding, &c.*

XVIII. *Why the Phariſees could not endure our Saviour.*

Part III

Doctrines the Commandments of Men, and making more species or kinds of duties and sins than God hath made; Their Zeal for *Mens Traditions*, more than for *Gods Commandments*: Their great exactness in little things; such as Tything Mint, Anice, and Cummin; and preferring them before the weightier matters of the Law, Judgement, Mercy and Faith; Their placing Religion mostly in Externals; Their cloaking their Naughtiness with Long Prayers; Their accounting themselves defiled by any thing without them, *&c.* And moreover his forbidding to call none Master upon Earth, or to pin their Faith on any mens sleeves: His freely and ingenuously shewing them wherein the power of godliness consisteth, *viz.* in inward Purity and Holiness: And preaching up only an inward, real and truly Moral Righteousness.

Philal.

Philal. And to be ſure the Apoſtles did in all things follow the Example of their Great Maſter. Part III

Theoph. Yes, no queſtion, as far as they were able: And among other, it may be ſhewn they did ſo in ſuch inſtances as the forementioned. And, I fear, were they alive now, that there are many pretended Chriſtians that would quickly change their Opinion of them, and upon ſuch accounts carry themſelves towards them (as much as now they profeſs to admire them) as our Saviour intimated to the Jews, they would towards the Prophets, were they then living, as great honour, as in garniſhing their Sepulchres, and otherwiſe they profeſſed to have for them. And for many years after our Saviour and his Apoſtles, did the temper and ſpirit we have been deſcribing, mightily prevail: but as the Chriſtian World grew worſe and worſe, which was eſpecially after it came to be freed from Per-

XIX. *When the temper and ſpirit that have been deſcribed, began to decay in the Chriſtian World.*

Part III

Persecution, and to enjoy rest and prosperity, it more and more decayed: And the generality of Christians grew miserably narrow Soul'd, and contentious with each other about little matters, and rigorously to impose their own private Conceits upon their Brethren, and pronounce those Hereticks that would not receive and admit of them: To lay a greater stress upon that which they pleased to call *Orthodoxy*, than upon an innocent and holy Life: To evaporate Religion into meer Air and Speculations: To burthen the Worship of God with unprofitable & needless Ceremonies; and by overmuch pomp and gaudery, to rob it of its Primitive Simplicity and Spirituality: And in a word, quite to forget the great end and design of Christ's Gospel. So that the excellent Spirit we awhile since commended, seems to be utterly lost in those Places where the Bishop of *Rome* bears the sway; the very great decay

XX. *The Pope beholden to the decay thereof for his Power.*

decay of it being that to which he was first beholden for his Power. But, blessed be God, it hath been much revived in the Churches, which have thrown off his Yoak; though there are yet but few in these neither, in whom it is in that measure and degree discernable, that it was in the most Ancient Christians. And the generality of our greatest Professors are still very defective in it: And even most good men in too many Instances yet to seek for it.

Part III

XXI. *That it is much revived in the* Protestant *Churches though the generality are still greatly defective in it.*

Philal. If it were once, in some good measure, prevalent in the *Protestant* World; I am perswaded we should soon see those very Blessed Dayes, that have been so much talked of, and that all pious Souls, and good Christians long for.

*XXII. *If the invisible Antichrist were once fallen, the visible one would quickly follow it.*

**Theoph.* I verily believe we should: And that we shall not much longer wait for the downfal of the *Visible Antichrist*, if the Spiritual and Invisible One, whose Seat is erected in our

Part III

own Breaſts, were once fallen. This being that which is like, as long as it continueth, to keep the other in his Chair, in ſpight of all our Prayers, and other *endeavours* to pluck him thence.

But my dear *Philalethes*, 'tis high time now to conclude this Diſcourſe, and refreſh our ſelves with a ſhort Supper: for we cannot but be both of us ſufficiently tyred, and hungry too.

Philal. If I am tyred, then well may you.

II. *The Conclusion.*

Theoph. Yes truly am I, and as ſharp ſet, as one that hath loſt his Dinner. Wee'l therefore no longer exerciſe each others patience, than while we put up our moſt earneſt Prayer, that at length it may pleaſe the God of Peace to guide all our Feet into the way of Peace: That he would give us teachable Tempers, modeſt and meek Spirits: and that the differences in our Sentiments may ceaſe to have ſo ill an influence upon our minds

minds; as to create ſuch unchari- Part III
table heats among us, and unchri-
ſtian Animoſities; to the great diſhonour of God; the no leſs Scandal and Reproach of our moſt Excellent Religion, the raiſing of Jealouſies in our Governours, the Expoſing our Church and State to the Common Enemies, and the greatly endangering our Immortal Souls. That the Profeſſion and Practice of Chriſtianity may not ſo rarely go hand in hand: And that we may place our Religion in *doing*, rather than in *talking* and *diſputing*: And may behave our ſelves as thoſe that underſtand wherein the Life and Power of Godlineſs doth indeed conſiſt. That [*Non magna loquimur ſed vivimus*] may be ours, as it was the Ancient Chriſtians Motto, and that the old Primitive Spirit may now at laſt prevail among us. That we may not peremptorily purſue our own pri-

vate

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vate Humours, and the Concerns of Parties, and prefer them before indifferent and impartial Enquiries after Truth; or oppose them to the publick Peace, Reason and Interest. That we may hate a selfish, private Spirit, as unworthy of the benignity, and generosity of the Christian Religion. And lastly, that we may contend with each other about nothing more, than who shall express, in the midst of our different Perswasions, most Charity and most Candour. *God grant that our* Jerusalem *may at length be made a praise in the Earth, by a confluence of these, infinitely above all other, desirable Blessings.*

Philal. Amen.

FINIS.